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ARNOLD BENNETT

ON

Religion After the War.

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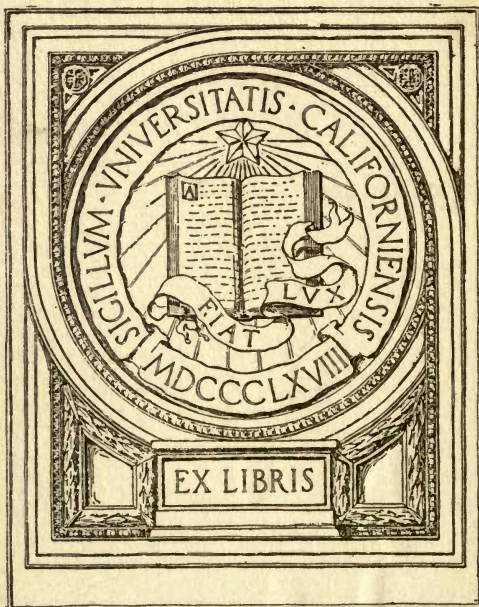
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THE R. P. A. ANNUAL : 1917

RELIGION AFTER THE WAR

BY ARNOLD BENNETT

THE war has proved that the European races are as capable of heroism as ever they were in the past. The physical courage of mankind has been most brilliantly demonstrated afresh. The war has also proved that the consciousness of national danger can still re-vitalize patriotism and make it a genuine virtue inspiring the patriot to great sacrifices. Further, it has shown that sloth may be turned into industry, and industry doubled where industry already was. But I doubt whether it has done much else to glorify humanity. The wonder is that it has done so much, seeing the outrageous idiocy of modern warfare ; for those nations who are forced into it must suffer morally from its deleterious and shameful contacts as well as those who bring it about.

Some people, however, claim that war has an improving effect on the intelligence, and that in especial it destroys illusions and bestows the sense of reality. If it did, it would perhaps be worth its price. But it does not. This particular war may have destroyed a particular British illusion about a particular foreign country, and it may have given to a large number of people a new sense of the reality of those ancient institutions—death, pain, and hunger ; but on the general body of illusion the war has had no effect save perhaps to enlarge it, and assuredly the sense of reality has not as a whole been sharpened. Every nation involved in the war has patently and admittedly lived in the grossest illusions about the war, and no nation has showed a keen desire to envisage realities.

What a light is thrown on the national frame of mind by a certain phrase which has been current even in the best British journalism since the war began. That phrase is : *There is no harm in admitting now—*, and it will still be

tremendously current when the war ends. The signing of the treaty will free us from the irritation caused by hundreds of journalists who can never say that the enemy is engaged in any operation without saying that the enemy is *feverishly* engaged in that operation ; but long after peace has become a fact the tell-tale phrase, "There is no harm in admitting now," will continue to be rife. All official communiqués nearly without exception are obviously composed by persons who love comfortable illusions for the delectation of other persons who love comfortable illusions ; and to read most of them is to feel humiliated at the capacity of human nature for crude self-deception. Of the belligerents, it is precisely the most bellicose, the supreme professional bruiser of the earth, which is deepest sunk in illusions of its own manufacture. Indeed, war is both the offspring and the mother of illusion, and a state of war produces a state of mind in which illusion must flourish.

Consider the probable influence of all this upon the fortunes of the Christian religion in the United Kingdom. We were prosperous, over-luxurious, and idle. (When I say we, I exclude, as people usually do in such generalizations, the poor, though they are the majority.) We have had a shock. In the physical sense we have braced ourselves. We have put off a certain amount of luxury, and we have worked as perhaps never before. We have made material sacrifices. We are conscious of some degree of rectitude. Again, war has given birth in us, as war always does, to a fear of freedom, an intolerance of minorities, a desire for uniformity as well as unanimity. Further, we have been in danger. Lastly, and chiefly, capping all, the conditions have been favourable to illusion. The moment, therefore, was eminently suitable for a Christian revival. If Christianity, with its offer of eternal security in return for an act of faith, with its specious appeal to the spirit of intolerance and to the spirit of self-satisfaction, with its machinery still complete, with its undeniable virtues, and with the enormous prestige of its grandiose historical past—if Christianity could not find new vitality and acceptance amid the circumstances of the present war, would it ever be likely to find new vitality and acceptance ?

Has Christianity found new vitality and acceptance ? No realistic student of human nature would have been surprised if the churches and chapels had rapidly filled with emotional crowds of devotees who, uplifted by an unaccustomed austerity and an unaccustomed diligence in labour, were seeking in

religion a refuge from all the mighty and terrible facts of the European situation. Such a phenomenon would have done nothing whatever to rehabilitate Christianity in the minds of the thoughtful; and it could not have lasted; but it would assuredly have shown that Christianity had some force left, and that sundry fundamental criticisms of Christianity had not penetrated below a certain level of intelligence in the mass of the population. Assuredly the leaders of Christianity would have hailed it as the long-desired proof that science was naught after all, and there would have been some diverting altercations.

The phenomenon, however, did not occur, nor anything resembling it. The adherents of some varieties of the Christian creed may have slightly increased; the adherents of the majority of them have kept on decreasing, as before. Solemn intercessory prayers are the less frequent as the war proceeds, and the alleged spectacle of "a nation on its knees," or of a national church prosecuting a "mission," has impressed nobody, not even the organizers thereof. At the beginning of the war there seemed to be a chance that church-going, particularly on week-days, might become fashionable among ladies whom war had bereaved or made solitary. There would have been far more excuse for such a fashion than for some other war fashions, and some spiritual and material good might have conceivably resulted from it. But the tendency expired.

As for the achievements of the messengers of Christianity at the front, I can only speak from my own very fragmentary knowledge. I know that some of them have behaved admirably as men, earning the sincere respect of other men whose interest in Christianity was as detached as my own. It is highly probable that in hours of crisis they have given moral and even spiritual support which was valuable. At least one of them—a Wesleyan Methodist—has sent home excellent war correspondence. But I have found no evidence that they have made solid and permanent conversions to Christianity. And I am bound to say that after a fairly intimate and frank acquaintance throughout the war with British officers of all sorts and ranks—officers who have been to the front and returned battered or whole, and officers with the dangers of the front still waiting for them—I have yet to meet one officer whose attitude towards the church and its rites was better than indifferent, while the attitude of the majority of officers has been hostile or contemptuous. (Of course I confine the

assertion strictly to my own experience, and it is right for me to say that I did once, at the front, come across an officer who rose very early on Sundays before a heavy day's work and unostentatiously and simply went to mass. He was a Frenchman and a clericist.)

When one looks broadly at the record of the British Christian churches in regard to the war one sees—Y.M.C.A. huts. I have no accusation to bring against Y.M.C.A. huts, and I am ready to believe that they generally fulfil a useful function. But I cannot accept them as proof that Christianity has come triumphantly or even respectably well out of the war. Indeed, the multitude of them does not in the least degree modify my conviction that the war has finally demonstrated the authenticity of an event which in importance far transcends the war itself—namely, the fall of the Christian religion. The fall of a religion, even a religion relatively so crude and poor in theological invention as the Christian, is a majestic and overpowering circumstance, with enormous implications. It cannot fail to solemnize even those whose devotion to truth, after an age of acrid bitterness, suffering, and passionate derisions, has brought it about.

Some will say: "But if Christianity is dead, what are you going to do?" To which I should answer that I do not propose to do anything. To which again they will rejoin: "But religion is a universal human necessity." If by the word "religion" is meant merely moral aspirations towards an ideal, I agree. But if the word is to retain its ordinary meaning, and to connote a supernatural dogma concerning an alleged creator of the universe and an alleged future life and the proper means for providing for one's welfare in that future life, then of course I disagree. I have no supernatural religion, and I have never had one. I do not feel the need of a supernatural religion, and I have never felt such a need. And though it would be unphilosophical to be positive about the future, I do not think that I shall ever feel such a need, or that if I do feel it I shall ever succeed in satisfying it. I was brought up in an atmosphere of dogma. I regularly attended all sorts of divine services, and some of my earliest recollected feelings are those of instinctive protest against their absolute futility. I never prayed sincerely or without a sharp sense of the ridiculous. The moment when I could cut myself free from any religious organization was a moment of intense relief, and from that moment I have never entered a place of worship save in a spirit of sociological, historical,

or artistic curiosity, or to take part in some quasi-legal ceremony at which my presence was imperative.

To say that I am insusceptible to emotion when in a cathedral, a church, or a chapel would be untrue. And it would be strange if the temples of a religion which has solaced so many generations, caused so much history, and brought forth so much literature and art, and which is dead, could not arouse precious and powerful sensations in the heart of the unbeliever. But they are not sensations directly connected with the supernatural. They are far less connected with the supernatural than the marvellous sensations aroused by the sea, the desert, or the night sky. They are more akin to the sensations aroused by the sight of a battlefield, a picture gallery, or a secular historic building. My curiosity about a future life is intermittent and mild. It never inconveniences me. I shall stick to this life as long as I can, but the prospect of death gives me no moral or spiritual qualm. My conscience is utterly detached from any supernatural sanctions whatever. And I am in the last third of my existence. So much for the theory that supernatural religion is a universal human necessity. It is not a necessity in my case, and my case is the same as hundreds of thousands of cases. My case is, I believe, the common case of the tolerably educated human being of my generation and the generation following it. Indeed, readers may ask me why I should trouble to describe the normal in such detail. I describe it simply to rebut the official Christian assumption that the emptiness of churches is due to negligence and indifference, to a deliberate stifling of the religious instinct lest it should interfere with worldly indulgence, and that if people would only honestly *think* the churches would soon be repopulated.

The fall of Christianity is unconnected with negligence or indifference, or with a decay of morals. It has been accompanied by an improvement in morals. It is due partly to a scientific examination of the claims made by and for the Bible, but quite as much to the clear distinction—newly formulated by science, and nowhere with more cogency and humility than in Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*—between the knowable and the unknowable. In future the human race will inevitably less and less seek to frighten itself, or to regulate its conduct, by guessing at mysteries which it knows to be unknowable. We shall continue to guess, and some of us will guess more than others, and more plausibly (Mr. Britling, in the new novel by H. G. Wells, has guessed very

interestingly at a finite God); but never again, I think, will any guess have the authority of the great guesses of the past—guesses among which Christianity, though not the worst, is assuredly far from being the most sublime. It is impossible to foretell the vicissitudes of the Christian religion between the present time and the time when it will be definitely enclosed with its forerunners in the museum of history. One thing about it may, however, with all due diffidence, be announced as probable. The Christian churches, feeling more and more the acuteness of their material danger, will unite. In their strength they divided. In their weakness they will come together. The movement towards unison and union has already been initiated. Nonconformists are already more interested in amalgamation than in anything else. They seem to regard it as the cure for all their infirmities, even for their increasing inability to produce a satisfactory annual crop of preachers. And one wing of the Established Church is nearly ripe to fall back into the lap of the church from which it seceded. Such tendencies will no doubt be the leading features in the history of dogmatic supernatural religion after the war.

To a certain type of mind—and that not the least honest—this outlook upon a future from which the support of the “divinely revealed” has been absolutely withdrawn will seem dark and bleak. Yet why should it seem so? If it is impossible to conceive that henceforward any “revelation” can win the allegiance of those higher intelligences without whose concurrence no new dogmatic supernatural religion could really take root—and it is impossible—why be afraid or even distressed? There remains for us, more than ever, in the words of that writer of genius, D. H. Lawrence,

The terrible ecstasy of the consciousness that I am life.

There remains also for us the consciousness, into which we have yet by no means fully entered, that we are living in a transcendent epoch in the evolution of human progress. The significance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is that we have cast off the greatest illusion that man’s weakness in the face of the mysterious universe ever invented for his own reassurance. The illusion was that any consideration can be more important than loyalty to humanly ascertained truth. And the fact that we have cast it off is a sufficient proof that we have acquired strength to do without it. The step has been tremendous—so tremendous that the fall of Christianity itself is a mere episode in it. Probably not for

hundreds of years will mankind have travelled far enough beyond it to be able to see it in its true perspective.

And in my view the great courageous men who incidentally destroyed the sanction of Christianity did much more than leave us with what Mr. Adams Gowans Whyte in his excellent little book defines as "the religion of the open mind." For myself I do not understand how religion and the open mind can go together. Religion surely implies that the mind is no longer open. Religion can only imply that the mind is genuinely convinced that the position which it has taken up is impregnable. Mr. Whyte's object in employing the word "religion" is clear and justified, but we must not be misled by that highly dangerous noun. I would maintain—and I doubt not Mr. Whyte also—that the aforesaid great courageous men left us with a conviction of impregnability which is the equivalent of a religion,—the conviction that nothing matters so much as the facts. The desire for truth, the joy in truth for its own sake, must and will be to the future what dogmatic supernatural religion was to the past. The statement that humanly ascertained truth comes first, and must come first, in importance may be a dogma. It is at any rate a dogma which is based upon both instinct and reason, and not upon texts, legends, and guesswork. We are bound to accept it because at our present stage of evolution we cannot conceive the possibility of its contrary. And we do accept it with an enthusiasm which will match the enthusiasm of any apostle of a religious creed. Inseparable from it is the idea of human justice.

The ascertainment of the facts of the universe, the facing of those facts, and the doing of justice according to those facts—here is the triple inspiration of the future inspirers of the race. You may call it religious, or spiritual, or moral, or all these, or you may deny that it is either spiritual or religious or moral, as your fancy pleases; but it is all the inspiration that will be available within any period of time that we can now envisage. If you say sadly that it is not enough for you, I say in answer that it is enough for me and for the great majority of the minds with which I am acquainted. It provides me with all the "religious" emotions which I need. A popular "religion" may well develop out of it, and if it does the name of Comte will rise almost to the very centre of the firmament—and stay there, for such a religion could not ultimately repudiate its debt to Comtism. But at first the religion might not be recognizable as the offspring of its

parent, and would almost certainly not recognize itself. Futile to attempt to sketch even vaguely the possible shape of its first form, though one might safely predict that it would at the start include elements of mysticism, as indeed does Comtism! The mysticism, however, would be ornamental, not basic. But whatever form any new popular "religion" may take, one may be absolutely sure that the last adherents of Christianity will denounce its advent as the end of all things and the final catastrophe of the human race. And by that sign, and by the persecution and ignominy which will pursue it, it may be known for its authentic self.

[*Believing that the European upheaval will, among other things, transform religious thought, the Editor of this ANNUAL invited expressions of opinion as to the prospective outlook from some of the leading representatives of the Humanist gospel. Without presuming to dictate in any way, he suggested the following points as deserving of consideration :—*

(1) *Is it reasonable to assume that the traditional belief in Providence governing the universe can endure in the light of the great World War?*

(2) *Will not the religion of the future, as a result of the unforgettable revelations of this supreme tragedy, be humanist rather than theological?*

(3) *Must not the training of coming generations be based on science and reason rather than on speculative beliefs?*

The following contributions are in response to the Editor's invitation.]

WILL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE THE WORLD WAR ?

*AN ATTEMPT AT FORECAST BY REPRESENTATIVE
HUMANISTS.*

I

BY SIR RAY LANKESTER, K.C.B., F.R.S.

I FIND it difficult to discuss the question as to what effect the great war will have on religion, because no uniform meaning is attached to the word "religion" by the various classes of thinkers who attempt to deal with this matter. By many the word "religion" is used to indicate only the one creed and church which they support, while by others it is employed to indicate only the one which they attack. In both cases it is usually the Christian religion which is in question.

But, so far as I can judge, the word "religion" has, if correctly used, a wider meaning. It signifies an attitude of mind which has grown up and been handed on by mankind, in considering and attempting to deal with the great and mysterious forces in the world around us. In primitive times and among primitive peoples it takes the form of attempting to explain or in some way systematize these forces in a scheme of cause and effect, for the purpose of controlling them. Religion in the primitive savage is a more or less elaborate scheme for compelling active demons—imagined by him as the personal agencies at work in every variety of existence and occurrence outside the savage himself—either to avoid doing injury to him or to do injury to his enemies. He seeks to gain this control by trickery, threats, or violence. Magic and witchcraft, with their special adepts—medicine men, wizards, and dealers in "fetish"—are the outcome.

Then follows a later stage in which—with the same ultimate purpose—worship and propitiation of the demons or gods replace the hostile attempts to gain control. Prayer, adulation, and self-abasement are made use of, and reverend priests and costly temples are supported by the fees paid for the services of the intermediaries between man and the gods. To the various systems of this kind the term "religion" is most usually applied. The Jewish and the Christian religions, the Buddhist and the various "religions" of the Greeks, Egyptians, Norsemen, and other early civilizations, are examples. It would, perhaps, be better to speak of them as "cults," "mythologies," and "creeds." As man yet further proceeds with the same ultimate purpose—that of controlling nature—we find a new development attaining to great importance. This is the determination to investigate and understand natural forces so as to control them and accommodate our lives to them. "Natural science" or the knowledge of nature takes the place in this new development, once occupied by witchcraft, and later by prayer, sacrifice, and priestly mediation. This is Rationalism. It is as much "a religion" as its predecessors, since, like them, it is concerned to understand and to control the forces of nature. It has a creed based, not on terror nor on poetical myths, but on experiment and reason. The essential element of all religion belongs to it. The Rationalist, like the most abject African tribesman and the most saintly high-minded Christian, is actuated by the desire to discover his relation to the universe, and to secure happiness for mankind by knowledge of that relation. All three equally desire to bring about the adjustment of human motive and action to the inexorable laws of nature.

The desire to attain to knowledge of the Eternal and to understand man's destiny in order to fulfil it in joy and gladness is, and always has been, the essence of religion. The man whose action and course of life are guided by that desire is—few will venture to deny—"a religious man," though he may not believe the creed, mythology, and cosmogony of any one of the popular religions or the doctrine of any church. Rationalism is a religion, and is as truly so described as is Christianity. Its creed is that by science, and not by faith, shall man attain nearer and nearer to the understanding of the Eternal.

It is, I think, of very little consequence that the horrors of the great war must render the traditional belief in the bene-

ficient government of the universe by Providence untenable. No one has ever accepted that belief in the plain sense of the words. The existence of evil has always been an insuperable difficulty in the way of those who have tried to conceive of God as omnipotent and yet a benevolent man-like being, similar to a philanthropic head of a state. There are plenty of innocent people who, nevertheless, think that they can, and do, so conceive of him. This war will not disconcert them; other wars have not done so. The religion of the future immediately following the present war will not be affected by such considerations.

In my opinion, the Christian religion—which, we must remember, is a complex of many different teachings—is being enormously strengthened in its noblest features by this war. Every man, woman, and child in this country and that of our Allies who loved it before, and many who were previously indifferent to it, will love it with fervour, because in fact its teaching comprises—indeed, has disseminated throughout the civilized world—the great principles for which we are fighting at this moment against Germany: namely, those involved in the desire of peace and goodwill among men, love of honesty and justice, pity and compassion for the suffering and oppressed, and the watchwords Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Those who nourish hostility to Christianity do so because they overlook the fact that under this name are blended and confusedly indicated two totally separate things. The first, on the one hand, is a system of morality which in its essential teaching is to-day approved by the united conscience of civilized man. It is the outcome of long ages of human thought and experience. The second, on the other hand, is a fantastic mythology, which was based upon Jewish tradition, curiously interwoven with non-Jewish polytheism, and with a poetic development of the widely-spread fables of a divine incarnation and the immolation of the god-holding victim.

The Christian mythology, though rejected by many educated men to-day, has, in the past, aroused the interest and gained the belief of millions of mankind, and still does so. It has been, by its poetry and mystery, the means of carrying the Christian morality throughout the world, and of establishing it as the basis of the moral creed of all civilized nations. On the other hand, Christian morality has given a value and currency to the Christian religion

which will persist when the mythological vehicle has lost all value.

Let me here guard against misapprehension. I do not regard Christian morality as a totally new and astounding thing discovered (so to speak) by Jesus of Nazareth. Pretensions of this kind have been put forward as an argument in favour of the supernatural character of Jesus. Consequently, with the desire to show that the belief in that supernatural character is a baseless superstition, a great deal of pains has been taken to prove that the moral precepts of Christianity did not originate with that religion, but are to be found, scattered here and there, in the writings of early Greek and oriental sages. I have no doubt that this contention is correct. Nevertheless, it is also the fact that it has been, and is, directly through the spread and impulse of the Christian religion that this moral teaching has been carried over the earth, and its highest and noblest features have become incorporated in the moral creed of the Western world.

It is abundantly evident that, under the name of Christianity and the Christian Church, human weakness and perversity have created repulsive systems of self-torture, of tyranny, and injurious repression. Every kind of insanity and imposture, the most sordid ambition and the vilest cruelty and lust, have made use of this as of many other "religions." But it is a mistake to regard the offences of those who have thus abused the power of a religious organization as an index to the character of the essential teaching upon which the organization was founded.

In spite of the ghastly inventions of monasticism, puritanism, ecclesiastical supremacy, and the torture of heretics, the moral doctrine of Christianity has, through all vicissitudes—by hidden, as it were, subterranean growth—survived and developed, and become purified and wedded to the conscience of modern man. Whatever we have to register of the iniquities of the authorities of the Christian Church during its growth from the position of an obscure sect to one of world-wide power and domination, the fact remains that the philanthropic precepts of charity and unselfishness, pity and humility, which were distinctive of Christian teaching when it first appeared, have been approved and, as it were, absorbed by all civilized peoples, and form the central feature of that "moral law" which is accepted by them. Christianity is the actual "begetter" of modern moral law. It is, no doubt,

possible to speculate as to whether mankind would have reached by now to an identical moral ideal had the Christian Church never come into existence. Speculations as to "what might have been" have but little value.

Whatever its failures, we cannot doubt that Christianity (often by the agency of heretics and seceders from "the orthodox Church") has in the past given, and does at the present day give, a currency and authority to some of the finest conceptions of human duty. Even though accompanied by much that is incompatible with the reasonable conclusions of later times, the Christian morality has given permanent features to the moral law recognized by the civilized world. It is precisely on account of the deliberate rejection of that Christian element by the German military rulers that the whole civilized world regards Germany with horror and loathing. We are fighting for what we all recognize as the permanent and indisputable essence—refined, interpreted, modernized, it is conceded—of Christian morality. And so I venture to maintain that the outcome of the war will be a strengthening of the hold on men's minds—not of Christian mythology, or ritual, nor of ecclesiastical domination and obscurantism—but of the essential precept of Christian morality, "Love one another."

As Rationalism slowly spreads among the peoples of the earth, the crude mythologies of early ages cease to carry authority, but remain as interesting evidences of the evolution of human thought and speculation. The philosophy of the Greeks, on the one hand, and, on the other, the moral precepts of the Jewish doctors, assimilated and reproduced by Jesus, have become—the one, the parent-stock of modern philosophy; the other, the indisputable basis of the common morality of the civilized world. Yet the gods of Olympus have become lifeless shadows, and those of Judæa will also pass. It is the fact that the only important addition made by the modern world to the moral precepts of Jesus of Nazareth (apart from the rejection of some of its ascetic and local excrescences) is that of which Huxley writes—namely, the duty of "veracity of thought and action, the resolute facing of the world as it is when the garment of make-believe with which pious hands have hidden its uglier features has been stripped off."

The Christian morality has been deliberately rejected by the leaders of German militarism. We are fighting for the triumph of that morality—to make an end of the German

moral system which teaches that treachery, murder, and torture are rightly applied by Germans to their fellow-men in order to increase German wealth and material domination. The triumph of the Allies will lead to the firmer establishment of "peace upon earth, goodwill towards men"—the ideals of Christian morality. Even should that triumph lead to some temporary recrudescence among peasants and dreamers of some of the vanishing superstitions of the Christian mythology, we can tolerate the latter for the sake of the high ideals which they have carried with them. There can be no serious relapse in that direction. In due time Rationalism will be left—together with the essential doctrines of the Christian morality—in possession of the field; and Rationalism will, by further knowledge of the evolution of man, finally justify that high code of morality (which the conscience of humanity has, through ages of struggle and suffering, built up and accepted) by tracing the steps of its origin and gradual adaptation to human needs.

Finally, let me quote a pregnant passage from *Evolution and the War* (Murray, 1915), by my friend Dr. Chalmers Mitchell:—

"I assert as a biological fact that the moral law is as real and as external to man as the starry vault. It has no secure seat in any single man or in any single nation. It is the work of the blood and tears of long generations of men. It is not in man, inborn or innate, but is enshrined in his traditions, in his customs, in his literature and his religion. Its creation and sustenance are the crowning glory of man, and his consciousness of it puts him in a high place above the animal world. Men live and die; nations rise and fall; but the struggle of individual lives and of individual nations must be measured, not by their immediate needs, but as they tend to the debasement or perfection of this, man's greatest achievement."

II

BY LEONARD HUXLEY

THE psychology of war and that of religion certainly seem to have some elements in common. The first lesson a man learns in the trenches, and the profoundest, is, we are told, that his life and destiny are at the mercy of forces outside him. Over these he has no control. Each day he has no expectation of surviving to the next; if the next day finds him alive, it is just so much pure gain. He has a definite job to do with all his energy; the rest he must leave to the great unknown. In his own little circle the infinite fulfils itself daily. So far his existence presents that complete resting on the will of a controlling power which a working religion aims at.

Furthermore, the fighter on either side is inspired by an idea possessing religious force. Here, is a genuine patriotism roused to fever heat by the long-inculcated belief that a chosen people is ringed round by scheming enemies, jealous of its inherent superiority. There, is a spirit roused not by mysterious enmities, but by often-repeated acts and loud-spoken menace. It is not patriotism only, but the spirit of international justice and humanity roused by overt aggression, by calculated cruelties and treacheries, which have already provided two martyr nations. Each side is moved by belief in an ideal; inherent superhumanity against a shared humanity. Each uses its material resources as best it may; but there is no question of materialism against idealism, either in the philosophic or the unphilosophic sense.

Here are two fundamentals of the simple religious outlook. Priests and preachers have under their hands the profound sense of the Outside Power overwhelming self, and the stimulating idea of a universal right, to which they attach the Divine sanction with all the efficacy of ancient ceremony and sacramental appeal, promising to purge the spirit and attune it to the guiding power that will make the right—*i.e.*, one's own ideal—ultimately prevail. So far the war factors are likely to aid a kind of elemental religion. But, on the other side, it looks to an impartial eye as though the formal organizations which call themselves Christian were brought to hopeless bankruptcy by their attitude towards the war. If the Sermon on the Mount has literal validity, the only Christians who follow its teachings to their logical conclusion

are the conscientious objectors. Indeed, the story runs that among the incriminating literature seized at the house of a leader among these was "Bishop Gore on the Sermon on the Mount." Was it not Bishop Magee, the Chrysostom of Peterborough, who declared that society run on the lines of the Sermon could not stand for twenty-four hours? Appalling, also, is the way in which either side finds the other hypocritical in its profession of Christianity. A cross fire of those who were about to ally themselves with the Turks vowed it would be the end of right and justice—would even cast a doubt on the Divine government of the world—if the Entente Powers, professing Christianity, called in the help of Africans or Asiatics, or the ungrateful and treacherous Japanese. The Roman Catholics of Germany—pious two-fifths of the population—invoke the same Godhead, the same saints, the same infallible Pope, against the Roman Catholics of France, of Italy, of Ireland. The German Protestants, more steeped in individual study of that two-edged weapon, the Bible, outdo our most narrow-minded sects in more than Cromwellian, more than Boer, self-identification with the Chosen People, to whom all things are lawful in proving their high status. At the head of them is the Kaiser, with "Our old Ally at Rossbach" up his sleeve—that approver of the *fait accompli*, gratified by human hecatombs, showing his favour by fat harvests and gracious permission, as the preachers tell the people, to torpedo defenceless shipping.

An Old Testament ideal? Yes, but firmly held by men who avow themselves orthodox Christians. Nineteen centuries seem only to have laid a veneer of the gospel of love over the European's insatiable soul. And what of the preachers who go about instructing us why these horrors have been permitted by Omnipotence? It is, they say, because of our national sins, our want of faith (as construed by an amazing theology), our failure to observe the Sabbath, our devotion to money-making or games. Let the nation pray all together, and faith will prevail.....over the equal faith, the similarly united prayers of our opponents, while vows, entreaties, protestations, intercessions, sputter equal and opposite round the throne of grace.

For these curious reasons, we are told, a bold, skilful, organized, relentless nation has been "permitted" to make war upon half the world, and confound the innocent with the guilty. In all this there is little instruction and less comfort. It calls up a picture of mockery.

Whatever upspring of the primeval sense of the over-riding "not ourselves" may be brought about by the war, whatever comfort in the thought of following a superhuman example of self-sacrifice for an ideal and for the safety of those we love, it seems clear that, to a critical intelligence, the intelligible basis of current theology has crumbled away.

III

BY J. A. HOBSON

I DO not think that the experiences of the war will be directly favourable to Rationalism. Alike for the fighting men and for the spectators, war is an orgy of unreason. Whereas the ordinary life of peace presented, even to the less educated and less thoughtful mind, a general and an ever-increasing prevalence of order, in which most things that mattered were fairly regular and calculable, and the chapter of accidents was a relatively small part of life's volume, in war-time a sudden transformation takes place. A few scientific soldiers may be able to trace here and there a long streak of connected cause and effect, a rationale of events. But, for the overwhelming majority, the events form a vast chaotic kaleidoscope in which the accidental and the mysterious prevail, and in which one's calculation and personal will play a negligible part. The minor regularities and discipline of an army are mostly imposed by an authority which makes little appeal to the reason. "Theirs not to reason why" is a sufficient commentary on the soldier life. The major happenings, both to the individual, the army, and the nation, flash out sensationally from a world of chance. In other words, war is a return to an age of miracles, without even a clear sense of the personality of the miracle-monger to give them a connective tissue.

Add to this the return to "the herd mind" which the feeling of collective peril brings about. Not only emotional, but intellectual, self-control is seriously damaged. The individual ceases to think and to feel for himself. He abandons himself to the passionate suggestions of the herd. Even when a nation is said to organize for war, the process is little more than a complex improvised huddle—not a clear-sighted rational plan of co-operation. How far this criticism is applicable to military arrangements I cannot tell; but, bearing in mind the fact that at the opening of the war preparations

only existed for an expeditionary force of trivial size, it seems likely that an appalling mass of error, waste, and disorder has everywhere overlain the plans that have been thought out. As regards the political and economic arrangements of the country, and what may be called the war-mind of the nation, they show a manifest decline of rationality as compared with the normal order.

In every belligerent nation self-glorification, vilification of the enemy, a mania of suspicion, and a bottomless credulity are prevailing notes. The fine qualities of comradeship, self-sacrifice, courageous endeavour, which accompany the struggle, contribute little or nothing to that toughness of mind upon which the reasoning processes depend.

Not only do "chance" and the miraculous abound in the occurrences of war, but the whole episode is the substitution of an irrational for rational modes of settling differences. The terms of settlement must materially affect the future lives of countless millions of human beings. These terms will have been determined and imposed by physical force—not by reason, appeal to justice, or any moral or intellectual principle. Thus war is itself a liberal education in unreason. It leaves behind a legacy of terrible memories, smouldering passions, herd enthusiasms, disordered nerves, and broken careers. In every department of life the period of the war will register a violent break into the past. Under such conditions there is little to favour the cause of Rationalism. It is unlikely that politics, industry, education, social and domestic activities, will be induced by experience of the war to base themselves on "science and reason." Some urgent attempts thus to reform life in reasonable methods will doubtless be made, but the atmosphere will be unfavourable.

I expect to see a rapid spread of religious, political, economic, philosophic, and scientific fads and superstitions, the products of mental irritability, sensationalism, and credulity. The old dull puritan Protestantism, with its dogmas and austerities, is doubtless doomed. But in all likelihood we are in for an era of swift-changing florid superstitions and quackeries of every sort. A process of mental recuperation will doubtless supervene, provided that some tolerable security can be provided against another plunge into the higher barbarism. But I confidently expect to see a rich crop of religious varieties springing out of the blood-soaked mind of the nations.

IV

BY SIR BRYAN DONKIN

ALTHOUGH the subject of "Religion after the War" does not strike me as affording much opportunity for fruitful discussion, I willingly submit a short statement of what I think about the questions that are suggested.

First. I see no reason for assuming that persons who have hitherto held the belief that a "Providence" governs the universe are likely to renounce their creed on account of the present war. I refer, of course, to those who thus believe in spite of some knowledge of history, and who are aware that most modern Christian peoples, when at war with one another, pray for victory to what they presume is the same Deity, and continue to reverence him as God whether they win or lose. To such believers God is at once all-wise and inscrutable, and he will not be abandoned by them because he permits a larger amount of bloodshed and barbarity in this war than in any other within their memory or knowledge. None of those whose religion has any influence on their conduct now, and whose reason has been powerless to make them doubt the truth of their creed, are likely to be in any way shaken in their convictions whatever the results of the European struggle may be. Seeing, however, that belief in a directing Providence has long been declining in this and other nations now at war, in spite of some recent efforts to bring pseudo-science to its aid, this question is surely unimportant, and need not in any way trouble the minds of serious Rationalists.

Second. The question of whether the religion of the future will be "humanist rather than theological" permits, as it seems to me, no categorical answer, unless indeed some clear definition of the terms contained in the question be first postulated. In so far as a "humanist religion" may be taken to mean such a belief in the so-called moral progress of the human race as may strengthen in individuals the emotion of sympathy with humanity at large and inspire continual efforts to assist it along its upward road, the problem of this war's possible influence on the spread of such a religion would be solved only in accordance with the personal hopes, or fears, or beliefs of those who attempt to attack it. On such as believe that biological evolution has been, and is, gradually producing an innate "sense of the State," as fore-

shadowed, I think, by Mr. H. G. Wells in one of his speculative essays, this colossal world conflagration may possibly have a disappointing effect, by obscuring the prospect of humanistic religion, or at least postponing indefinitely the practical activity of the newly developed sense. On the other hand, to those who do not believe that any social improvement in the sphere of morals is to be looked for as attainable by biological evolution, but only, if at all, by the conscious efforts of man himself, the tragedy of this war may afford a reasonable stimulus for striving to bring about such a degree of international comity regarding political and social questions as might serve to render almost impossible the incidence of any future war between the members concerned. Such an effort, however, would, I suggest, be strictly rational, and not "religious" in any intelligible sense of that word of myriad meaning.

Third. As to the matter of the training of coming generations, I agree that it should be based on reason, and on science in the widest sense of the word. The young should be guided as soon as possible along the path of rational thought; and, as regards "religious" matters, any definite teaching should be confined to an intelligible account of the genesis of the chief religions that now prevail in civilized countries. I allude here only to the education required by the State, being opposed to any general attempt to interfere with the private teaching of any religion, or any superstition, unless demonstrably and seriously and widely harmful. We have a good example, in this matter, in the country of our geographically nearest Allies.

V

BY THE HON. JOHN COLLIER

IF there is one thing more evident than another, it is that Providence does not govern the world, or that, if it does, it governs it very badly. Of course, this is no new discovery; it must have been obvious at any time to an impartial reasoner; but the horror of the Great War has made it so much more obvious that many people are beginning to realize it who have hitherto successfully avoided all such speculations. There is no getting away from the dilemma that an all-powerful God could have prevented the war, and

that an all-benevolent one would certainly have done so, unless he were so far from being all-knowing that he did not foresee it. If we are to use our reason at all, it is as certain as anything can be that the world is not ruled by an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent Deity. The evidence on this point is overwhelming. Indeed, it can only be got over by a negation of reason which makes all discussion impossible.

As I have said, the war has so strengthened the evidence that many religious people are beginning to face the inevitable conclusion that the power of the Deity must be limited if we are to retain our belief in his goodness. Of course, this is mostly put forward very timidly; but, once it is granted in any degree, the dogmatic basis of all the Christian Churches is undermined. What are these Churches? They are communities of men and women bound together by a number of very definite beliefs, which are supposed to be of immense importance, and the rejection of which is said by many of the Churches to entail the punishment of eternal torture. In nearly all these communities there is a body of men set apart from the rest whose business is mainly (at any rate, in theory) the exposition and defence of these definite beliefs. That these beliefs must be mostly untrue is obvious from their being mutually contradictory. That is, the dogmas of one Church to a great extent contradict the dogmas of another. The dogmas that are common to all the Christian Churches are very few. Of these few, the most important is the belief in the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence of the Deity. As this is certainly untrue, we can only come to the conclusion that none of the Christian Churches have a reasonable basis.

So, then, arises the question: Why should there be Churches? Why these communities of people bound together in a common fellowship of unreason, bound to the support of absurd dogmas which they imperfectly understand, and which are mostly directed to the confutation of the rival dogmas of other Churches? Indeed, the chief binding force of many of these communities is hostility to other communities. The Low Church and the non-conforming sects derive a great deal of their strength from a common hatred of the Church of Rome—the one thing in which they are united. The Church of Rome, on the other hand, brands all rival religions as heretical, and persecutes them whenever it gets the chance.

Now, if we are to get any good at all out of the immense coil of the war, we must endeavour to have a more united people. We must drop our petty differences, and continue to work together for the common good in the way that we are now doing under the binding power of a common danger and a common misfortune. We must have no more of these artificial divisions caused by mutually destructive dogmas. If the Churches are to survive, they must drop their theology and concentrate on good works; and as for the priesthood, that monstrous body of mostly excellent and well-meaning men who waste their time and stultify their intellects by theological exercises in which they expound their own impossible dogmas and controvert others equally impossible, can they not be merged in the general community, and not remain a race apart, despised by men and unwholesomely coddled by women? If they want to serve their fellow creatures—and they mostly do—let them give up theology, the Science of God, of which they know nothing and never can know anything, and become humble students of the real Science of Man and the world he lives in, of which they can already know a great deal, and of which the knowledge is always growing. On this knowledge depends the progress of the world.

VI

BY PROF. J. B. BURY, LITT.D., LL.D.

No one is likely to dispute the proposition that every tissue of our social fabrics will be affected by the convulsion which is now shaking the world. In the sphere of religion it is not daring to indicate as a probable result that the conflict between reason and tradition, freedom and authority, will pass into an acuter and intenser phase. We need not be surprised nor need we be alarmed in case reactionary forces should at first appear to gain ground. A hundred years ago, after the last great European conflagration, ecclesiastical powers rallied their hosts with imposing vigour and success. For a time the work of eighteenth-century thinkers seemed to be in danger, and the wave of revolutionary thought stemmed by the repaired dikes of obscurantism. The success was superficial. It did not avail to stay the steady advance

of reason, armed with new weapons and inspired by new hopes; and the outstanding figure of the nineteenth century was to be, not Pius the Ninth, but Darwin.

It seems unlikely that the war will seriously affect the popular belief in Providence. Yet it is possible that the tragedy which is being enacted may bring home to many thoughtful religious people, as no far-off tragedies of the past could do, how glaringly inadequate the current theology of the Churches is as an explanation of experience. There may be a wide and more insistent demand for doctrines less obviously out of keeping, intellectually and ethically, with the general body of modern ideas. The liberal clergy, who (whatever may be thought of their logic) have been doing the work of Rationalism, may have a new stimulus and encouragement to go on their way more boldly than ever reinterpreting the old phrases and eviscerating the old doctrines.

But it would, I think, be a mistake for Rationalists to expect that the slow process of "creeping from point to point" will be greatly accelerated. Is anything short of a new scientific revelation, comparable in import to those which are associated with the names of Copernicus and Darwin, likely to quicken the pace perceptibly, even for a time? And it should be borne in mind that Reason cannot hope to enter into her own till education is completely reformed and all men are taught in childhood enough about the general facts of the past to enable them to see that history is not the dossier of an incompetent Providence, but the record of an uphill struggle, in which their race, heavily handicapped, has accomplished wonders. In this country education is the field in which, immediately after the end of the war, we have to hope and fear most. There appears to be a general consent that our system needs a radical revision, and that education must no longer be treated by governments as a minor department, in which their only duty is to devise compromises, which satisfy nobody, between contending claims. It would be too sanguine to cherish a hope that the secular principle may be introduced. The adverse influences are still powerful, and nothing will be left undone to avert such a change. But perhaps we may look forward to some improvements in the programme of liberal education; and improvements, however small and timid, must in the long run promote the cause of freedom and reason.

VII

BY HENRY W. NEVINSON

IN answer to the three questions suggested by the Editor, I should like to say:—

(1) It is difficult for me to put myself in the position of those who still believe that Providence, in the form of a benevolent and omnipotent Being, with all the attributes of a man except a man's weakness and wickedness, directs the course of the universe. It is hardly imaginable that such a belief exists, and yet, when the clergy and other people speak of God, I find they mean little else. It is a primitive conception which has survived innumerable wars, earthquakes, plagues, and other disasters. Perhaps it is the highest conception of which the majority of mankind is at present capable. At all events, I see no reason to suppose that this war will alter it generally. The Bishop of London has told us that "this is God's war," and that "we are fighting for the Nailed Hand against the Mailed Fist"; and there are thousands, even among educated people, who take the Bishop's word as God's so long as it flatters their own self-satisfaction.

(2) Again, it is difficult for me to realize that there can exist a "theological" as distinct from a "humanist" religion, believing as I do that all religion is an outgrowth of the human mind, and that except through the human mind there can have been no revelation of truth to man. I know, however, that many educated people in various countries and of various religions do still believe that special revelations of truth have been made by Divine agency external to mankind, and I think it likely that these beliefs will continue to survive in spite of all the horrors of war. Partly because very few people reason or connect one set of ideas with another; but partly also because many teachings of supposed revelation are so immeasurably nobler than the average ideas of the clergy and other people that few would take the trouble to understand them, or would regard them as fit for anything but ridicule, unless they had a sanction assumed to be Divine.

(3) As to the question of future training, so much depends on the definition of the words "science," "reason," and "speculative beliefs." If by science and reason are meant only such forms of knowledge or thought as can be precisely

tested by mathematics, chemistry, and the exact narration of events, I am afraid the training would produce deadly dull men and women. If we exclude "speculative beliefs" from training, we must take care not to exclude with them the work of the human imagination, the speculative wonder that fills us in contemplation of man and the universe, the myths by which alone the highest thought can often find expression, and all the fairy-tales and stories which the mind demands, especially in childhood. The Jewish literature collected in the Bible contains passages as splendid as anything in the Greek or English, and of such a different character that we should lose incalculably as a nation if the Bible were excluded from our general reading. In the past we have made the mistake of insisting that the Jewish literature and no other should be widely known, and that even its tales of primitive savagery should be accepted as lessons for edification. The result of that training is seen in our bellicose bishops. But still we cannot afford to lose fine old stories and great imaginative poems which have so long formed the chief part of our national thought; nor can we afford to lose those noble paradoxes by which Christ has caused so much perplexity to our governors, pastors, and masters, who profess to accept his every word as God's, but find themselves acting and teaching in direct contradiction to these words every hour of their lives.

VIII

BY SIR H. H. JOHNSTON

THE following questions on religion have been put to me to answer:—

(1) *Is it reasonable to assume that the traditional belief in Providence governing the universe can endure in the light of the great World War?*

In the long martyrdom of man, extending over at least half a million years, since he acquired more than the brute's capacity for suffering, the present war is only one among the many great episodes of horror which have plunged hundreds or thousands of humans—in this case, millions—into physical torment and mental anguish. There have been the ice ages and the floods, the landslides and the sinkings of Palæolithic times; the recorded and the unrecorded earthquakes, volcanic

outbursts, and tidal waves ; the pestilences and famines ; the Goths and Germans, the Huns, the Magyars, and the Tatars invading Italy and Greece, the Normans attacking France, the Danes devastating Ireland, the massacres of the Amerindians by the Spaniards, the holocausts of the Turks and Tatars, the Thirty Years' War between Protestants and Catholics, the Seven Years' War, and the ruin these wars brought to Southern Germany ; the Napoleonic wars, the African slave trade and slavery in America, the existence in London and in great American cities of sweated women, working incessantly from dawn to near midnight to gain a mere pittance ; the life in classical and medieval times of the galley slaves, the torments of the Inquisition, the prisoners in the sulphur mines, and the agonies undergone during the great sieges of history. We know absolutely nothing concerning the Force we call God ; and, assuming such an intelligent ruling force to be in existence, permeating this universe of millions of stars and (no doubt) tens of millions of planets, we do not know under what conditions and limitations It works. We are quite entitled to assume that the end of such an influence is intended to be order out of chaos, happiness and perfection out of incompleteness and misery ; and we are entitled to identify the reactionary forces of brute Nature with the anthropomorphic Devil of primitive religions, the power of darkness resisting the power of light. But in these conjectures we must surely come to the conclusion that the theoretical potency we call "God" makes endless experiments, and scrap-heaps the failures. Think of the Dinosaurs and the expenditure of creative energy that went to their differentiation and their well-nigh incredible physical developments. But they were tossed aside as a mistake. The tree-climbing mammalia, with supple hands and fingers, were taken up, became the chosen race, and finally evolved Man, while the discarded ungulates and carnivores were dying out.

" Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer.

" Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation's final law,
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw,
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed.

" Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
 Who battled for the True, the Just.

“ O life as futile, then, as frail !
 O for thy voice to soothe and bless !
 What hope of answer, or redress ?
 Behind the veil, behind the veil.”

To such a Divine Force as we postulate, the whole development and perfecting of life on this planet, the whole production of man, may seem little more than to any one of us would be the chipping out, the cutting, the carving, and the polishing of a gem ; and we should feel as little remorse or pity for the scattered dust and fragments as must the Creative Force of the immeasurably vast universe feel for the *disjecta membra* of perfected life on this planet.

It has seemed to me, peering into the enigma of existence, that the gospel of Pity, the installation of Loving-Kindness as a cardinal axiom, the attempt to save failures, the finding of a niche even for the unsuccessful, were principles never so well expressed as in the teaching of Christ in Palestine nearly 1,900 years ago. And that we justly commence our present era from the approximate date of the birth of that remarkable personality, since Christianity in its essence may be the beginning of a cosmic force of far-reaching application, even though for many centuries its light was hid under a bushel of stupid myths and foolish practices.

In regard to the present war, we should do well to apply all our energies to getting it over and making it the last of “ great ” wars, and not exaggerate its importance as an agency for good or evil in the history of man.

(2) *Will not the religion of the future, as a result of the unforgettable revelations of this supreme tragedy, be humanist rather than theological ?*

I sincerely hope so. I hope that the religion of the future will devote itself wholly to the Service of Man. It can do so without departing from the Christian ideal and Christian ethics. It need only drop all that is silly and disputable, and “ mattering not neither here nor there,” of Christian theology—a theology virtually absent from the direct teaching of Christ—and all of Judaistic literature or prescriptions not made immortal in their application by unassailable truth and by the confirmation of science. An excellent remedy for the nonsense which still clings about religion may be found in two books: Cotter Morison’s *Service of Man*, which was published as long ago as 1887 and has since been re-issued by the Rationalist Press Association in its well-known six-penny series, and J. Allanson Picton’s *Man and the Bible*.

Similarly, those who wish to acquire a sane view of the relations between man and God would do well to read Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*.

(3) *Must not the training of coming generations be based on science and reason rather than on speculative beliefs?*

Decidedly. The value of all teaching must be tested by its applicability to the interests of Man. On this basis I am sure that essential Christianity will survive, expand, and become the religion of the human race.

IX

BY H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

I THINK too much has been said as to the effect of this war on the mind of the human race as regards its view of the Future Life. The thing that comes easiest to man is forgetfulness, and nature has ordained that forgetfulness of disaster is one of the chief necessities of the mind of man.

I was in Paris as a child after the Commune; we spent the winter in the south of France, and returned next spring. Paris had completely recovered. She had forgotten.

I am writing this eight hours after a Zeppelin raid, and already the thing has become shabby in my mind. Ten years after we have beaten the Germans the Great War will be the Great War, beginning to get hull down on the horizon.

I do not think it will have much effect on man's view of the Future Life. It will elevate all men—except the Germans, and the pro-Germans, and the neutrals, simply because to fight for liberty is elevating to all men; but I cannot see an Agnostic changing his opinion, or a believer in God changing his belief, because of this war, which differs from the Napoleonic wars only in size and the brutality of the enemy.

Science and reason are splendid things, but I do not believe that this war is going to fill the children of the future with any more passionate desire for them than was possessed by the children of the past. Engines are the children of science and reason. Men are the children of men, and I foresee that the children of men may very possibly revolt against the tyranny of engines. This war is, in fact, a war between engines and men, as all wars have been since the invention of the flint arrow-head.

X

BY THE RIGHT HON. J. M. ROBERTSON, M.P.

As the vast conflict progresses, we seem to hear less and less of the "revival" of religion that was announced as actual, or imminent, in the earlier stages. Early in September I learn from a newspaper article by Dr. J. Holland Rose, the historian, that "religion, in its essentials, is *now* a matter of interest to very many of the troops." This would seem to mean that it was formerly not so, the preceding sentence having reference to "the religious work done by chaplains (often in our huts) and by our workers"—*i.e.*, in the huts and by the workers of the Y.M.C.A., which Dr. Rose justly describes as doing much for the bodily and mental refreshment of the troops, with little time to spare for "spiritual" operations. But, on any view, the finding of "matter of interest" in the "essentials" of religion—whatever these may be—is hardly an attitude of mind to be described as indicating a religious "revival" at the front. And there is really little more (if so much) to be said of the position at home. Something is still said from time to time of the persistence of the revival in France, where, according to English orthodox notions, there was most scope for the phenomenon; but as regards our own country and our own Army, even clerical testimony, so far as my own observation has gone, is for the most part quite unfavourable to the theory of a religious renaissance.

In Germany, on the other hand, the evidence is rather the other way. I know nothing in English official pronouncements that will compare with the allocution addressed some months ago by the Kaiser to a gathering of German Protestant clerics. For his Majesty, the state of war was for the German laity, in effect, an *Imitatio Christi*, as, no doubt, he has always reckoned it for the Army. Broadly speaking, the religious emotion is everywhere in the ratio of the degree of the national strain. France invaded is presumably more ostensibly religious than she would have been had the enemy been confined to the other side of the Rhine; and even without evidence we may presume that in Belgium, Serbia, Turkey, and Poland the religious instinct is more active than in England. Russia, in peace time perhaps the most religious country in Europe as regards the mass of the population, had

no need, so to speak, of "revival" in that regard, but is probably more religious than ever in respect of the general nearness of the conflict and the immensity of the national strain.

If this view be broadly correct, there would seem to be at least no greater chance of a religious renaissance after the war than during the struggle. All along, the direct attempts at revival appear to run mainly to a propaganda in favour of prayer; and of all forms of religious activity that would seem to be the one least likely to grow in favour in modern times. At no time have Christian or other warriors shown much practical faith in prayer as a military expedient, however systematically they may have practised it. The pre-eminently military Romans always laid much more stress on the auguries than on the invocations; and though Cæsar, as a consummate man of the world, always carried on the recognized practices, he is credibly reported to have said that when he desired to give battle the auspices would be as he wanted them. And doubtless they were. Of great English captains, the most religious is Cromwell; and it is to Cromwell that his countrymen complacently attribute the adage: "Trust in God, but keep your powder dry." As who should say: "Trust not in God, but in yourself."

That the powder proverb has never been recognized by religious people as a veiled blasphemy is one of the many proofs of the fundamental irrationality of the religious mind. Napoleon's saying that Providence is generally on the side of the strongest battalions used to be so reprehended—by English divines; but it frankly puts the real belief of most people who unaffectedly practise prayer as a regular thing. I am not sure, indeed, whether I was quite justified in ascribing a touch of freethinking to the Tonga chief Finow, who before Napoleon observed that he had generally found the Gods to be on the side of the best warriors. At least, it would certainly be inaccurate to predicate freethinking of all the people in England who are convinced that this war will be won by the side which can best maintain the output of munitions and fighting men. It is, in fact, impossible to obtain the name and address of any educated advocate of National Prayer, clerical or lay, who avows the belief that prayer will avail in the absence of high explosives. The real Christian faith in the matter is just the faith of Voltaire: "Incantations will destroy a flock of sheep *if* administered with the requisite quantity of arsenic."

This being so, what are the prospects of religion after the war, if prayer be an important ingredient in religion? People are discussing "religion after the war" (albeit with much less assiduity) as they are discussing "trade after the war," and it would be hard to say which topic elicits the worst nonsense. But certainly the nostrum-mongers in regard to trade have the better prospect of seeing their nostrums tried. In the war temper, anything that looks even remotely like vengeance is more or less welcome; but if prayer will not flourish in war time, when will it? It is true that there is a piety of success and prosperity, as there is a piety of adversity and defeat; but the former is notoriously the less religious frame of mind. When the Germans are finally beaten, other people will be told that God has shown himself a God of justice; and there will be a fair number of people who will never trouble themselves to ask what kind of divine justice it is that first works immeasurable devastation and massacre by its human instruments, and then puts them down, with or without destruction of similar extent. But it is the more thoughtful people who count for most in any calculation as to how religion is prospering; and while there have been many accomplished people who could ostensibly take comfort in the Berkeleyan thought that all things, good and bad—love and crime and sin and cruelty, flowers and stars and agony and disease, scenes of beauty and scenes of horror and filth—exist "only" as ideas in the Divine Mind, it begins to be doubtful whether that formula will continue to give philosophic comfort in respect of the millions of maimed men and the myriads of violated women who will for themselves or others carry on the memory of the war. Bereavement, doubtless, raises another religious problem. It may be that among many of the millions of stricken folk for whom the sun has been darkened by the death of those they most loved, the belief in immortality will be stimulated as a means of solace. If such comfort can outweigh the pursuing horror of the historic tale of the Armenian massacres, for instance, religion may be said to have regained ground. But will any such countervailing process really take place, on any considerable scale? If anywhere, is it not likely to be in the defeated Empires?

If there is one thing that religious writers claim more constantly for religion than another, it is that faith sustains in affliction; and national affliction will presumably be specially felt by the finally defeated peoples in the World

War. The Jewish religion, which is a main part of the basis of the Christian, was developed not in an age of national success, but mainly in periods of captivity, subjection, and oppression. It is true that large bodies of the Hebrews simply deserted the religion under which their State had been brought to ruin, and became absorbed in the population of Babylon; but it was the devotees, there and at Jerusalem, who built up the historic religion of Jehovah. In seventeenth-century Germany, again, a religious revival took place after the ruinous Thirty Years' War; and the *Stillen im Lande*, the Quietists, prepared a soil for the new Pietism of a later generation—a more religious phenomenon, by common consent, than the rabid temper of theological feud which had raged through Germany for a hundred years after Luther. Similarly, it was in the period of defeat and collapse of the Moslem cause in Spain that Mohammedan faith revived and the Moorish freethinking of the Middle Ages died out. Religion, in short, seems to flourish more in adversity than in prosperity; though there is always the countervailing factor of revolt from religion on the part of those who have clearly realized its futility as a check to either moral or physical evil.

Beyond such reasoning from analogy, however, it would be scientifically unsafe to go; and no critical Rationalist will commit himself to predictions. That faith, as contrasted with the critical spirit, is fostered by decadence is broadly true. But in the civilization of modern Europe, which is so much more complex than that of all previous centuries down to the eighteenth, and is so constantly conditioned by international reactions, there can be no certainty that any of the old developments above noted will be repeated. Culture to-day is a much less destructible thing than it was in the past, whatever may be the case as regards *Kultur*. Even in Germany, then, the theocratic and State-Christian creed of the moment may fail to maintain itself in the state of peace; and it is very doubtful whether the substantially non-Christian Socialist movement will be swallowed up by any revival of mere evangelicalism. Unless German civilization is to retrograde in every way as it has morally retrograded during the past fifty years, Christianity there is likely to prove insalvable even by adversity.

As for Britain, the prognosis, as aforesaid, is clearly unfavourable. If war really moves men to take a new interest in the "essentials" of religion, it will *ipso facto*

set them upon inquiring as to its truth ; and that is of all activities the one most fatal to religious belief. What the more prudent champions of faith are bent on doing is, as usual, to maintain a belief in its utility. I have always regarded it as a clear proof of John Mill's non-comprehension of religious history that he could affirm that the utility plea had been seldom employed in religious controversy. It has always been employed ; and to-day it is far more in evidence than any other. I have just read an interesting essay by an advanced Unitarian preacher, in which it is candidly avowed that the religion of the past, built on the cosmology of the savage, is quite inadequate to the tests of the modern intelligence. In effect, he admitted that it is false. What he pleaded for was not a straightforward resort to truth-telling, but a new manipulation in which some kind of God should be more plausibly presented. Atheism, he alleged, had frequently been "tried," and found inadequate to human needs—an untruth as gross in its way as any in Hebrew cosmology or legend ; and it was on that comprehensive fiction that he rested his faith in the future of his own intangible and elusive creed. Doubtless he will continue to find a congregation. But if the war has strengthened any purely intellectual conviction, it is probably the belief in scientific solidity of thinking, whether as regards munitions or anything else ; and it seems at least improbable that an indurated trust in accuracy and reasoned action will continue to be found easily compatible with the general reliance on myth, fable, miracle, prayer, and a doctrine of salvation by surrogate sacrifice.

It is, indeed, notorious that men are slow to apply to matters of creed the tests of coherence and credibility which they rigorously bring to bear on every "business proposition." The banker who will mercilessly analyse the prospectus or balance-sheet on which he is asked to lend money will often take on trust promises of a future life adapted to the consumption of the ancient Britons ; and the engineer, whose business is conducted with the strictest eye to dovetailing and detail, will still listen reverently on Sundays to reasoning upon the like of which no man could run a wheelbarrow. Even among the men of science, the "chemically clean" specialist may live in an intellectual dustbin. The other day we had a presidential protest against British apathy to science and research from Sir Arthur Evans, who is so admirably scientific as an archæologist, and who complacently presents

as his political creed the empiricism of the man in the street. Most of the revolutionary publicists of England still conduct themselves towards religion as do well-regulated Chinese mandarins (even they are becoming scarce !) towards the cults of Heaven and Earth. Socialists, Labourists, Fabians, Suffragettes, Democratic Controllers, for the most part either take no interest in the question of sanity of belief or carefully conceal it if they do. For coherent scientific thinking all round there is practically no demand anywhere.

And "still it moves." The habit of religion passes as did the habits of the Stone Age—æonically. Palæolithic passes into neolithic; and that into an age of metals, very slowly, very confusedly, almost imperceptibly. The great difference is that modern transformation, slow as it seems from within, is really incomparably more rapid than the old. So much we may venture to predicate concerning "religion after the war."

THEOLOGY AND THE WAR

BY WILLIAM ARCHER

IN a letter from Germany which I read the other day—no matter how it came into my hands—the writer, a lady, said: “If we should be defeated in this war, it would be a terrible thing for religion, for no one would any longer believe in God.” I was reminded of the saying of a scholar-soldier who fought in the American Civil War, on the side of the South. “When the end came,” he said, “there were many of us who lost their faith in God, but not their faith in the cause.” But the question how we are to conceive of God in the face of such a spectacle as Europe now presents can scarcely depend, one would think, on the mere allocation of victory and defeat. Will the victors, if there is anything either of reason or humanity left in them, be able to sing “Te Deum laudamus” with an entirely reverent and unapproachable mind? One can scarcely believe it.

The theological aspect of the war is indeed so grotesque that it would need the irony of Swift to do it justice. We can scarcely open a paper without finding some pathetically earnest, bewildered soul going through the most amazing logical contortions in the endeavour to reconcile the plain facts of the daily record with the theory of an all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful Creator and Ruler of the Universe. The effort to cling to our comfortable preconceptions is very natural. No one wants to lose his faith in a Friend outside and above the cruel and heartless concatenation of things which we call life, precisely at the moment when its cruelty and heartlessness are most apparent, and the divine Friendship is consequently most needed. But the attempt to interpret the motives and actions of the Friend in terms of friendship and benevolence, as we understand them here below, is surely the most hopeless of intellectual enterprises.

War has always been cruel, but never, probably, so infernal as to-day. High explosives and machine-guns, to say nothing of poison-gas and liquid fire, have immeasurably heightened its hellishness. The Germans themselves were

the first to experience this. Their plan of hurling columns of men in close formation against strongly-defended positions led to scenes of horror almost without precedent ; for the rear ranks had to trample over ground thickly carpeted with the bodies of their dead and mutilated comrades, mown down by hailstorms of lead. There can be little doubt that the conduct of the German troops in Belgium was largely attributable to the shattering of their nerves by these indescribable loathsomenesses. The tactics of the Allies have perhaps not involved such concentrations of carnage ; but the measuring of degrees of horror is probably illusory, for each hideous experience *seems* the worst possible at the moment of its enactment. At all events, millions of men all over Europe have died in agony, after living for months in the midst of every sort of torment, physical and spiritual, that human nature can endure without succumbing. Millions of non-combatants have undergone untold miseries from famine and exposure, in addition to indescribable mental sufferings. Never before in history have death, disease, mutilation, starvation, pain and anguish in every possible form, run riot over such wide areas of what we still, from incorrigible habit, call the civilized world. It is true there have been mitigations. Charity has been organized and dispensed on a scale hitherto undreamt of. Medical science is no longer so helpless as it once was. The horrors of surgery are tempered by anæsthetics. But it may be doubted whether, on the balance, the ghastliness of war has not been increased rather than diminished by science. There has probably never been anything in the world like the scene on board a great modern warship battered to death by high explosives. And as to the numbers of our species that have, within a given time, been afflicted by all these evils, there can be no doubt that they are quite without parallel.

Meanwhile there has been a continual wafting of incense and chanting of praise from ten thousand cathedrals, churches, chapels, conventicles of all sorts, to the Power which is supposed to have ordained, and to regulate from moment to moment, this edifying spectacle—the Power which guides every bullet and countersigns every death-warrant. Thousands of professional apologists for this Power are explaining what great designs may be supposed to lurk behind its admittedly disconcerting proceedings ; millions of individual men and women, suffering intolerable torments of anxiety, are putting up, in silence or in broken words, petitions that from one

dear head or another the bullet may be averted, the shrapnel-shard may be wrenched aside. The Germans, during the first year of the war, at any rate, had not the slightest doubt that the German God, an old and tried ally of the House of Hohenzollern, was marching at the head of their columns, diving in their U-boats, and sailing in their Zeppelins, for the confounding of their impious foes, and the ultimate healing of the world through the universal dissemination, at the bayonet's point, of the unspeakably beneficent German spirit. I am not caricaturing their views. I have read them in black and white in a hundred places. It will one day be an interesting task for a statistician to sum up the number of times that, in German sermons, speeches, and articles, the couplet of Geibel's, popularized by the Kaiser even before the war, has been dragged in to account for the tactics of the German God :—

Und es mag an deutschem Wesen
Einmal noch die Welt genesen.

It may be questioned whether they are now quite so confident of Geibel's prophetic inspiration, the healing miracle having been so unaccountably postponed. But I have no evidence as to the present tone of their theology. Other nations have from the first viewed the policy of God with more surprise and, one may even say, misgiving; but all alike have appealed to him, sung to him, prayed to him, preached about him, with undiminished perseverance and fervency. There is nothing to show that there has anywhere been any considerable revolt against the theory that events on earth are directed in every detail by the will of an unseen Power—a will in all respects analogous to our own, save that it is unquestionably free, while our belief in our power of self-determination is by many believed to be an illusion.

And to all this multitudinous and world-wide appealing and beseeching—this vocal and silent supplication for ever thundering round the Throne—the silent not the least audible, we may be sure, if there be any ear to hear—what answer is vouchsafed from the empyrean? Never a whisper, never a sign, never a tremor of the ether. There sits God, surveying the hideous spectacle of devastation and massacre, and raising no finger to stay or to mitigate it. Does any one believe that the men who survive are those who are prayed for, and the men who fall are those who are not? There are innumerable testimonies to the contrary—testimonies of mothers and wives who have “wrestled with God” for the

lives of their loved ones, and have wrestled in vain. Does any one believe that a bullet or a torpedo is ever deflected by one hair's-breadth from the course prescribed by the physical forces which set it in motion, and which act upon it as it moves? No one really believes any such thing. I am not here relying on any preconceived dogma of an eternal and immutable sequence of cause and effect running through the whole universe from the beginning to the end of things. I am not maintaining it to be impossible that God could have interfered to spoil the aim of the man who launched the torpedo at the *Lusitania*. On the contrary, it seems to me perfectly possible. The action of mind upon mind, through no visible or ponderable medium, is now a matter of every-day experiment. If there be an all-embracing Mind, analogous to our own, though infinite in the scale of its workings, one sees no difficulty in conceiving it as constantly modifying by suggestion the cerebral processes on which our actions depend. Such guidance by suggestion would involve no interference with the order of nature; it merely postulates the existence of a force unrecognized and unmeasured, whose method of action has, however, several clearly-recognized analogies in common experience. Nor can one say with any certainty that such a force does not exist, and is not in constant operation. That whole range of our actions which seems to us to be guided by choice may, in fact, be the result of promptings from the divine mind. We may all be mere puppets of God, actuated by a sort of psychical wireless-telegraphy. It seems to me flatly impossible to say that this is not so; all I do say with confidence is that there is not the slightest sign of anything that we can recognize as intelligent purpose, to say nothing of benevolence, in the operation of any stimulating or controlling agency that may be conceived to exist. In other words, I do not say that we are not the puppets of God, but I do say that, if we are, he has a great deal to answer for. Any theory which relieves him from all immediate responsibility for the events of the past two years—to say nothing of the events of several previous æons—seems to me, if not more rational, at any rate a great deal more truly religious than that which makes him the deliberate fomenter of the whole world-frenzy.

There is no difficulty in conceiving a moral and beneficent government of mundane affairs. It is even possible—though this is harder—to conceive a moral and beneficent ruler whose action should be, in some small degree, influenced by the

performance or omission of acts of worship, and by the importunities of individual worshippers. But the very fact that we can conceive such an order of things only makes us more confident that it does not exist. Nor is there any one who really and sincerely maintains that it does. Jesus frankly admitted that the rain falls alike on the just and the unjust, and that the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were no worse than their neighbours. The plea of popular theology, that the ways of God are past our finding out, merely gives up the case. Of what use is it to tell us that if we were gods ourselves we would see the absolute justice and beneficence of all that God does or permits to be done ; but that, being purblind mortals, we cannot recognize the perfect beauty of the design which he is working out upon the loom of time, with our life-threads for the warp and woof? Of what use to us is a beauty which we cannot recognize, and which seems to us cruel and insensate ugliness? If it be said that one day our vision will be unsealed, and, from some celestial centre of perspective, we shall view the arabesque in all its glory, the answer is that, if the designer of the pattern could not execute it save through the medium of gigantic horrors like the present war, he had much better have let it alone. Such an episode in the history of our race is totally incompatible with the rule of any being who is at once benevolent and omnipotent as we understand the words ; and to use them in some sense which we admittedly cannot understand is simply to talk nonsense.

It may be said, with some justice, that I am merely applying a very obvious analysis to the anthropomorphism inseparable from every conception of God as a moral agent. The moment we depart from pure pantheism, and attribute to God personality and will, we inevitably create him in our own image ; and any criticism applied to a power so conceived is vitiated by the fact that the object criticized is not, and cannot be, the thing itself, but only a symbol of it, on an enormously reduced scale, suited to the limits of our human faculties. Nay, the phrase I have just used, "an enormously reduced scale," is itself tainted with anthropomorphism ; for it implies that there is actually some definite relation between our conception and the thing conceived, like the relation between a map of the world and the world itself ; whereas in all probability there is no more resemblance between any man's idea of God and the actual power that sustains the universe than there is between the algebraical symbol x and

whatever quantities it may stand for in any given equation. All this is quite rudimentary, and would not be worth repeating, were it not that I have a moral to draw. I suggest that the anthropomorphic god-idea is not a harmless infirmity of human thought, but a very noxious fallacy, which is largely responsible for the calamities the world is at present enduring. I suggest that the persistence of this god-idea is mainly instrumental in preventing people from recognizing what an indefensible anachronism war has become.

A typical example of its power for evil is to be found in Treitschke's now famous saying, "God will see to it that war constantly recurs as a drastic medicine for the human race." Treitschke was the most shameless of all anthropomorphists. He concentrated all his own prejudices, vanities, and even caprices, in an imaginary being whom he called God; and he was amply justified in declaring that an omnipotent Heinrich von Treitschke would see to it that war should constantly recur, at any rate until Prussia had conquered the world. Sensible men, of course, are quite sure that God, whatever he may be, is not an omnipotent Heinrich von Treitschke; but one fanatical phrasemonger under the dominion of this delusion can do more harm than a thousand sensible men can undo. And when a similar delusion takes possession of a man who is not merely a Prussian professor, but a hereditary, anointed War-Lord, who can doubt that calamity is inevitable? We laugh at the German Emperor and his appeals to his "alte gute Gott"; but how many millions of people know to their cost that it is no laughing matter! In a very real—nay, in an ultimate—sense, it is this "alte gute Gott" that has made the war. That is one thing—among many others—that English apologists for Germany forget. They forget that from the highest to the lowest—at any rate, to the lowest professor, preacher, and publicist—the Germans almost to a man believed in a God who had declared that war was the noblest of human activities, and was the appointed instrument through which the beneficent German spirit was to bring salvation to an ailing world. It is quite amazing to find—as I have found in the course of much recent reading—how German war literature is impregnated with this idea. One thought of Germany before the war as a rather godless country; and so, indeed, it was. But the war has revealed the fact that every German in his heart believed in a German war-god, the concentrated essence of all the prejudices and vanities begotten by the national experience from Mollwitz

to Sedan. And the Kaiser, as he had repeatedly stated even before the war, believes in an intimate personal relation between himself and this God, the sanctifier of his supreme will, the inspirer of all his sayings and doings. It may sound paradoxical, but what we are fighting against is, in the last analysis, that most inept of superstitions—the divine right of kings. It is true that, in such a fight, Russia is an odd ally; but it is none the less true that Germany is the only nation of Western Europe in which the superstition survives, and that, if the war does not put an end to it, the world will have agonized in vain. For the king who believes his right divine is almost bound to believe that it is conferred upon him by a war-god, who has, by an unalterable decree, made organized slaughter one of the supreme functions of kingship. The two superstitions belong to exactly the same phase of mental development, and arise from the same habit of seeing in God a mere magnified projection of our own prejudices.

But it is, of course, not only in Germany that war is excused, palliated, almost sanctified, on the ground of its being "the will of God." The Germans differ from other people in claiming a peculiar property in the war-god, and supposing themselves his special favourites, his chosen people. This is a consequence, or a symptom, of the peculiarly strong tribal instinct which has long prevailed among them—the instinct which, even in an anti-Prussian writer like Heine, gives to the word "deutsch" a note of intimate, exclusive affection, quite different from any sentiment aroused by the word "English" or "Français" or "Italiano." Even the sceptic and cosmopolitan in Germany believes in his heart that his race is the salt of the earth. National vanity is prevalent enough in other countries, but it is neither so universal nor so naïve in its manifestations as it is among the Germans. Accordingly, we do not speak of an English, French, or Italian God. We are content to share our God with other people. Nevertheless, we make God responsible for the war; we talk of it as the work of his inscrutable Providence; and some of us even try to make out, quite in the German spirit, that it is a purifying ordeal, designed for the ennoblement, the rejuvenation of the race. That sort of nonsense is well answered, in terms of theology, by one German theologian, F. W. Foerster, who has managed, even in the tempest and whirlwind of bellicose passion, to preserve a certain modicum of common sense. He says:—

The fact that God can extract some good out of evil does not justify us in calling evil good, or in employing it as a means well-pleasing to God. The Corsican vendetta is doubtless a better school of bravery than our legal system, but we do not therefore propose to introduce it into civilized countries.

But, though Herr Foerster scoffs at the ordinary cheap sophistries whereby war is reconciled with the goodness of an all-powerful God, he does not tell us how he himself proposes to effect the reconciliation. He does not tell us because he cannot. The thing is impossible. Any such reconciliation can only be a playing with words. It is no extravagant optimism to hope that a certain amount of good may result from all the suffering and horror of this war; but how disproportionate is the price paid for it! Some of us may even venture to trust that mankind is learning a lesson in this ordeal which—*human nature being what it is*—could have been learnt in no other way. But, then, whose fault is it that human nature is what it is? It cannot be the fault of an all-good and all-powerful God. If there is a God who wills the ultimate redemption of human nature, but can bring it about in no other way than this, then clearly he is not all-powerful, but has to fight for his ends against a very powerful obstacle—call it matter, or Satan, or Ahriman, or what you will. This brings us up to the Manichean theory of a good and evil principle for ever at war in the world: a theory which, so to speak, dramatizes the problem vividly enough, but does not begin to solve it; for to assume the existence of Ormuzd and Ahriman is only to shift the real difficulty a stage further back, and to leave as inconceivable as ever the unity from which this duality must have emerged. All our popular theology—the theology, for instance, of *Paradise Lost*—is purely Manichean. Whatever phrases we may use about the kingdom and the power and the glory, we always think of it as a restricted kingdom, a divided power, a glory sadly incomplete. In this there is no philosophic satisfaction, but only a confession of mental impotence in face of the mystery of existence. But, at any rate, a frank and explicit acceptance of the theory of a benevolent, but limited, power making for good, would be less harmful than the self-contradictory assumption of an all-good and all-powerful Will which employs Hohenzollern War-Lords, high explosives, poison-gas, the *Morning Post*, and Mr. Leo Maxse as means to its ends.

There is no great practical harm in the belief that the

world is directed by the will of God, so long as we clearly recognize that its good ends can be attained only through the active and enlightened co-operation of the will of man. The theory of the "will of God" becomes positively noxious only when it is made an excuse for the endurance and perpetuation of manifest evil. But if we want to think clearly, and see things in their plain outlines, unwarped by the mists of mythology, we shall have to admit that the only intelligent and purposive will of whose existence we have one jot or tittle of evidence is the will of man. It is to that will, and none other, that we must look for the amelioration of mundane conditions, towards which the abolition of war is only the first step. When we are asked: "What actuates the will of man? Whence comes that slow-moving, but irresistible, bias towards the good to which we owe all the progress that has been achieved from the days of the cave-man onward?"—we can only answer that, though the natural history of the idea of Good can be, to some extent, traced, the ultimate origin of the bias remains the one great mystery of the moral world. Is it the work of God? It is certainly the most plausible evidence we possess of the existence of some well-meaning power at work behind the framework of things. Kant's saying about the starry heaven and the moral law may be accepted without demur, if by "moral law" we understand no external code, but simply the bias towards good. It is the most godlike thing of which we have any real knowledge; but it does not point to the omnipotent personal God, the "magnified and non-natural man" of the theological creeds and formularies.

THE GREATEST ILLUSION

BY ADAM GOWANS WHYTE,

Author of "The Religion of the Open Mind," etc.

"TILL within recent years," said Sir Arthur Evans in his Presidential Address to the British Association, "it seemed almost a point of honour for classical scholars to regard Hellenic civilization, to which we look as the principal source of our own civilization, as a Wonder Child, sprung like Athena herself fully panoplied from the head of Zeus. But a truer perspective has now been opened out; and it has been made abundantly clear that the rise of Hellenic civilization was itself part of a wider economy, and can no longer be regarded as an isolated phenomenon."

Here, then, is a great illusion, once regarded by the learned as a cornerstone of faith, laid to rest. I have no doubt that the scholars were slow to confess it dead, and that some of them are still prepared to argue, in spite of the truer perspective provided by the Minoan Palace of Knossus and other discoveries, that Hellenic civilization was indeed a divine "sport." However, the tenacity with which such an illusion is cherished cannot compare with the affection for a similar illusion regarding Christianity. Sir Arthur's words might be closely applied to the event which is regarded by innumerable men and women as the principal source of all civilization. The birth of Christ divides darkness from light. It marks an era which brought something unique and transcendent into the world. Whether by human agency or by divine, there appeared on the corrupt soil of Paganism the flower, immaculate and immortal, of the Christian ideal.

This belief is natural to the orthodox Christian—that is to say, to any one of the numerous and contradictory sects that claim to represent orthodox Christianity. But it persists among people who have abandoned all the dogmas of Christianity and expressly repudiate any claim to be described as Christians. For them there is no equivalent to the Minoan Palace of Knossus. They look upon the Galilean as a moral genius who first perceived and taught many things which

were hidden from the hearts of mankind, who first poured the oil of pity upon the waters of strife, who discovered the jewels of compassion and brotherly love in human clay. And from this conception they proceed to make it "almost a point of honour" to regard Christianity as having conferred unprecedented blessings on the world. The Christian era is much more to them than a calendar period; it is the epoch which opened when the harsh laws of the struggle for existence felt, for the first time, the power of perfect altruism.

Now that a round dozen of Christian nations are engaged in a war which surpasses any pagan struggle in its horrors and its ferocity, this conception seems to demand revision. On more than one battlefield there stands, untouched in the midst of ruin, a crucifix. The caprice which spared the image of Christ is alleged to be divine; if it be so, then God does not disdain irony. Place the Galilean once more upon the cross, and he would see desolation and corruption more awful than any he could have witnessed when he brought peace on earth and goodwill to all men. Two thousand years have passed since he spoke his saving message and died to prove it valid; do the corpses of millions of his followers multiply the proof?

The challenge which the war implies does not, however, provide the best starting-point for a dispassionate examination of the Greatest Illusion. It does serve to shake faith in Christianity as a Wonder Child, but the wider perspective which history provides is likely to be more convincing than a single argument which is mingled with the passions of war. The claim which has to be met is briefly this: that Christ taught an essentially new ethic which has been of incalculable benefit to the human race.

On this subject it is useless to appeal to the verdict of the majority, or to the judgment of "accepted" authorities. Both jury and judge are biassed. They have been trained from childhood in the belief that Christianity was the first true dawn of morality; the intellectual atmosphere created for them by generations of historians and moral philosophers is transfused with this faith; they see the past of humanity in the mirage which the atmosphere creates. Everything pertaining to Christian morality is magnified and touched with divine brilliance; paganism is a lurid background, and heathenism a dark horizon. For the great majority of writers—and the majority of bookmakers have been Christians—the moral history of mankind has been contained in the Old

and New Testaments. They knew little of the moral heights attained by ancient civilizations, or of the lofty moral precepts of religions founded centuries before Christianity. Concentrating their attention on one corner of the world and one short section of time, they ignored the first glimmerings of morality in animal life, the slow and fitful broadening of the dawn among primitive human societies, and the clearer light towards which nation after nation pressed in its evolution. Indeed, few of them sought to penetrate behind the assumption that true morality was created by Christianity. They accepted it as an axiom.

The most effective way to test an assumption is to assume it true, and then measure the logical results with the gauge of fact. If the Christian ethic were indeed a revelation, one would have no difficulty in discovering the unique element which sets it apart. Again, the adoption of this precious novelty by nation after nation would be sure to bring about a moral elevation which in itself might be accepted as a proof of the Christian assumption. Does either the structure or the fruit of Christianity bear this out?

It is not a very laborious matter to compare the moral teaching of the Gospels with that of Jewish and Pagan writers, and with the ethics of earlier religions. But it is an exceedingly laborious matter to discover any Gospel precept which is without one or more parallels from the days when the world lay in darkness. Mr. McCabe has collected, in his *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, a large number of parallels relating to the leading moral doctrines of Christianity; further parallels in Buddhism, Confucianism, and other ancient religions may be traced with the aid of Mr. Gorham's *Ethics of the Great Religions*. The deeper one penetrates towards the spiritual centres of ancient civilizations, the higher seem the heights to which pre-Christian saints and sages reached. Every now and then one is startled to come upon a feature which was supposed to be a landmark erected by Christianity. Just as the dogmas and rites of Christianity find their forerunners in heathen religions, so the ethical ideals associated more or less closely with these dogmas and rites are legacies from earlier ages. Even the Beatitudes—those brightest blossoms on Christian soil—can be traced to former growths, from which, indeed, they show a certain degeneracy. Each "Blessed" is accompanied by its reward—a partnership which the Stoic would have looked upon as immoral.

Sometimes it is argued that, although the morality of the Gospels does not contain any new elements, it receives, in the synthesis provided by the personality of Christ, a form which is unique in its perfect beauty. The moral character of an individual is assumed to have properties different from the sum of his moral principles, much as a chemical compound has properties not possessed by its elements. This is a less easily argued proposition, because no two people form the same conception of Christ. Apart from the doubt whether Christ ever existed in the flesh, the data given in the Gospels are so meagre and so confused that they do not afford material for anything like a complete synthesis. The innumerable lives of Christ are a proof of the difficulty. It is a fact, however profane it may appear to be, that we are able to form a far closer conception of Don Quixote or Dr. Johnson than of the character who is alleged to be the unique expression of a saving ethic. The result is that each reader of the Gospels fills in the blanks according to his own notion of an ideal personality, and cuts away one or other of the various contradictory features which the Gospels reveal. Most of this process of moulding is unconscious, so that the artisan of the ideal is unaware how far his own prepossessions about the divinity or the human perfection of Christ enter into the final form.

The personality of Christ is, therefore, a frail reed on which to hang the massive claim of a complete moral revelation never foreshadowed and never to be surpassed in the evolution of the soul. We need hardly pause to point out how dubious this claim is in the light of all we know about human development. People who regard morality as something extra-human, stamped upon us like the die which gives the base metal of a token coin a higher than intrinsic value, will not be impressed by the scientific study of moral evolution. Nor will those who regard Christ as a supernatural being admit that science has anything to say on the matter. But those who realize that morality, no less than the habits, instincts, and mental powers of mankind, is a natural growth will need something more than anonymous gospels and conflicting ecclesiastical authorities before they agree that Christianity is a divine graft upon the tree of life. There is a place in natural evolution for moral as well as intellectual genius, but not for anything which does not derive its origin and sustenance from the roots of the past.

The more convincing argument, because its evidence is

spread over the broad face of history, lies in the record of applied Christianity. Here again, however, the evidence, as usually presented, suffers from the assumption that Christianity is necessarily perfect. Christian advocates treat it as the compiler of German official reports has treated the facts of the campaign—studiously ignoring or slurring over all unpleasant truths, and giving an air of verisimilitude to an imaginative account by inserting one or two minor facts too patent to be omitted. History has to be read anew, and in a spirit of scientific detachment, before one realizes the volume and weight of suffering imposed upon humanity in the name of Christ. We stand appalled before the “unprecedented” bloodshed and misery of the Great War; but if we sum up the victims and the agony of religious wars and persecutions throughout the Christian era, we are presented with a new standard of comparison.

The early Christians were persecuted, but the period of their suffering was brief; and their successors, once they had gained power and wealth, took an ample revenge century after century. They took it, not only against the Jews and other non-Christian heretics, but against each other. Persecution, war, and massacre distinguished the early controversies of the Church; in the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, the kingdom of heaven was rather the image of hell itself. The great councils of the Church and the rivalries of the Popes were marked with all the features of savagery. Even the great Augustine, so deeply revered to the present day, added a new beatitude, “Blessed are they who inflict persecution for righteousness’ sake,” and proclaimed that persecution was inflicted out of compassion for the souls of the guilty. Justinian, the codifier of the Roman law on which our own legal system is based, carried these principles into effect at the cost of thousands of lives. The conversion of the Franks, Goths, Germans, and other barbarian tribes to Christianity was not effected by preaching and epistles, but by the more convincing argument of the sword. Meanwhile ignorance, poverty, and periodic plagues were the lot of the people of Europe.

These things happened during the infancy of Christianity, before it had risen to the vigour which it enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages. Those were the times when Popes went into battle to assert temporal as well as spiritual power, and when the Crusaders were organized for the glory of God. The glamour of romance still veils the bloody reality of the

Crusades, about which we need do no more than quote Milman's verdict: "No barbarian, no infidel, no Saracen, ever perpetrated such wanton and cold-blooded atrocities of cruelty as the warriors of the Cross of Christ." To this period also belongs the Albigensian war, in which—to quote Milman again—"the great eternal principles of justice, the faith of treaties, common humanity," were trampled under foot as never before in the history of war. The immoralities of the Popes, the licentiousness of the clergy, and the vicious character of indulgences and other Church practices: these are matters over which the apologist may linger, urging that the Vicars of Christ could not be expected to rise too far above the level of Christians in general. The apology is fatal to the Christian assumption, but not even this futility can be advanced to cover the abominations of the Inquisition. In France, in Germany, but most of all in Spain, the Inquisition cast the shadow of death over innumerable homes; it was a malignant growth that thrust itself through every fibre of the social organism, and carried untold agonies and fears with it. Since the war we have been surfeited with the tale of German atrocities; its monotony wearies us. Let it be remembered that the Inquisition was far more subtle and comprehensive in its cruelty and slaughter. The Roman Church has been silent before the calculated crimes of Germany; does it recollect too vividly its own past?

The rise of Protestantism is commonly regarded as a movement of humane enlightenment; but, besides intensifying the bitterness of sectarian warfare, it failed to produce leaders who realized the virtues of toleration. With few exceptions all the leaders were in favour of persecution. They, and their followers for generation after generation, joined with the Roman Catholics in the attempt to suppress all knowledge and speculation which threatened the dogmas of Christianity. Whatever may be claimed on behalf of either Church, no one dares to assert that they fed the lamp of science for the illumination of the world. Professor White's assertion that Christianity "arrested the normal development of the physical sciences for over 1,500 years" is supported by the record of scientific history from Pliny to Darwin. And the long relentless persecution of opinion was, it may be observed, a direct result of the assumption that Christianity embodied a perfect and complete guide to the soul of man.

"Let the dead past bury its dead." This is a convenient

way of relieving Christianity of the accumulated load of crime and error. At the same time it is a surrender of the traditional claim to saving grace. In mitigation of this surrender we are told, however, that the convictions which led to centuries of persecution and suppression of knowledge were not genuine Christianity. Augustine, Jerome, and all the Fathers were not Christians; Luther, Calvin, Knox, and other great religious leaders were fundamentally mistaken in their reading of the Gospels. It has taken the world two thousand years of religious wars, holy persecution, and pious suppression of science to appreciate the real meaning of the message which *ex hypothesi* brought healing light to blind and suffering humanity.

Such is the casuistry of the modern apologist. And if we invite him to define this essential Christianity which has been overlooked by generations of scholarship and God-given insight, we get a different answer for every sect and every section of a sect.

Essential Christianity is anything, from the dogmas of the Catholic Church to those humanist and practical ideals which the Catholic Church describes as "dreary morality" and "drains." It is all things to all men. And as theoretical Christianity suffers from a chaos of apostles, we are forced to a study of modern applied Christianity in order to discover whether the unique and transcendent message is visible in action. At this point, however, it is vital to note that most of the Churches have become ashamed of a doctrine which was preached by all of them with complete conviction a generation ago. To our immediate forefathers, hell was an essential feature of the Christian message; it was the necessary obverse of the scheme of salvation, and it was derived straight from the Gospels. How, then, can we accept the view that real Christianity begins with regarding this doctrine as a conception too vile for any civilized being to entertain for a moment? The doctrine, by the way, remains in the Creeds; it is still part of official Christianity, and is an abomination which no amount of re-interpretation can sweeten to innocence.

However much the dogmas of Christianity may have been cut and trimmed, the plant still casts the traditional seeds of strife and pain. This is not a picturesque exaggeration; it is a plain statement of fact. A few years ago the "Big Frees" and the "Wee Frees"—both zealous Christians and indistinguishable in their dogmas—engaged in a prolonged

and envenomed quarrel which the civil power had to settle for them. Ireland to-day is divided into political parties which are really Protestant and Roman Catholic; and the malignant hatred of each for each maintains the old wounds of Ireland as open sores. Wales has been engaged in an ecclesiastical process which shows once more how theologians can hate each other in the name of Christ. And in England where will you find more sustained and ineffable contempt than the High Church feels for the Low Church (and *vice versa*), and each for the Dissenting bodies, and all of them for the Heretic, the Infidel, the Agnostic, the Atheist, and others beyond the pale? Were it not for the practical indifference of the mass of people towards official Christianity of all sorts, these internal dissensions would be more vividly realized. They exist in every town and every village, setting house against house, confusing civic effort, and blocking the progress of education; they exist in every household, setting husband against wife, parents against children, brother against sister, friend against friend. It is impossible to claim that the men and the organizations responsible for these barriers of hatred and distrust are inspired by a teacher who brought nothing but the perfection of love and moral beauty into the world. The barriers decay only when faith in Christian doctrine begins to yield to doubt and to the knowledge which doubt brings; they disappear only when thought throws off the last shackle of the Christian illusion. Twentieth-century Christianity proves, as the Christianity of all the years of Our Lord proves, that a faith founded on a super-human basis or on the teaching of any individual, however divine in appearance, is the father of intolerance, whose one virtue is consistency, and whose vices innumerable are written in blood and flame on the pages of history and live on to-day, impotent to kill, but still able to embitter the heart and cloud the mind. Let those who claim that Christianity ushered in the Golden Age examine that long record—the massacres, the religious wars, the organized persecution, the perpetual wrangling over dogmas now discarded as base and immoral superstitions, the suppression of learning, and all the other fruits of the many orthodox Christianities—and ask himself what there is to set against it, and how much of the atoning sweetness and light in the progress of humanity is due to the men who were martyred in the name of faith.

PRE-ANIMISM

BY EDWARD CLODD

ON the last page of *The Origin of Species* (1859) Darwin hinted that the theory of natural selection would throw "much light on the origin of man and his history." He abstained from indicating more, because, as he says in the Introduction to *The Descent of Man* (1871), plainer speech would only have added to the prejudice against his views. But, in the meantime, Huxley, disregarding the counsel of his friend Sir William Lawrence "not to ruin all his prospects by so rash a venture," pushed the theory to its logical issue in his *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), applying it to the mind as well as to the body of man. Unity and continuity are fundamental postulates of evolution, which, if it operates anywhere, operates everywhere, and to admit the contrary is to banish the spirit of order, and to open the door to the demon of confusion. But the question has passed from the speculative to the positive stage. Comparative anatomy has demonstrated identity of structure between the highest mammals and man; comparative embryology has revealed their common descent with modification; comparative psychology has shown that there is no break in the chain of mental evolution; and prehistoric archæology has brought its "great cloud of witnesses" to man's enormous antiquity and primitive savagery.

In his recent work on *The Senses of Insects*, Forel says that "there is no possible psychology without comparative psychology."¹ And, in full endorsement of this, Professor Baldwin, prefacing his words with the declaration that "mind runs through the universe," says that the evolution theory teaches that there is "no absolute break between man and the higher animals in the matter of mental endowment; that what difference there is must itself be the result of the laws of mental growth; and that the more adequate the science of the human mind has become, the more evident has it also

¹ P. 287.

become that man himself is more of a machine than had been supposed. He grows by certain laws; his progress is conditioned by the environment, both physical and social, in which he lives; his mind is a part of the natural system of things. So with the animal. He fulfils, as far as he can, the same sort of function; he has his environment, both physical and social; he works under the same laws of growth which man also obeys; his mind exhibits substantially the same phenomena which the human mind exhibits in its early stages in the child. This means that the animal has as good a right to recognition as a mind-bearing creature, so to speak, as the child; and this also means that the development of the mind in its early stages and in certain of its directions of progress is revealed most adequately in the animal."¹ Therefore, to study man apart is to misconceive him; it is to refuse to apply the master key to the interpretation of the story of his intellectual and spiritual history.

Of origins we know nothing; we can only seek to trace the processes, elusive as these often are, by which things advanced along certain stages. The inter-relation of inorganic and organic is fundamental; and, in the latter, the steps of the process from moneron to man are so graduated that we cannot put our finger on any one point and say, Here this or that function or faculty began to be. Therefore, dealing with man's psychical development, *we cannot say, Here he passed from the non-moral to the moral stage; or, Here he began to be a religious being.* We can only presuppose the emergence of conditions which made him such; conditions primarily involved in him as a social being. As a solitary animal he is unknown. "It is not good that the man should be alone,"² and Aristotle is at one with the compiler of the Book of Genesis when he says that "he who is unable to live in society must be either a beast or a god; he is no part of a state."³ The same idea is happily expressed in Sir Leslie Stephen's epigram that "a man not dependent upon a race is as meaningless a phrase as an apple that does not grow upon a tree."⁴

Beyond the fact that he was of mammalian descent and a gregarious animal from the start, we know nothing about "primitive" man. No clue to his dim, disordered concep-

¹ *Story of the Mind*, p. 35.

³ *Politics*, i, 2, 14.

² Genesis ii, 18.

⁴ *Science of Ethics*, p. 91.

tions has been left by the proto-human, typified by the *Pithecanthropus erectus*, from the fragments of whose skeleton, unearthed from a Pliocene deposit at Trinil, in Java, in 1902, is deduced the theory that "he represents a stage immediately antecedent to the definitely human phase, and yet at the same time in advance of the simian stage." Still more does this apply to the fragments of skull and jaw-bone found in 1911 by Mr. Charles Dawson in a Pliocene gravel bed at Piltdown, in Sussex, which have been named *Eoanthropus Dawsonii*. The skull is human, the lower jaw has a chimpanzee character, but the molar teeth are human in shape. The mixture of ape-like and man-like characters is remarkable in its bearing on a common ancestry. Neither from the numerous relics of the more remote descendants of these Paleolithic men can there be gathered anything concerning the "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realized." We are, as yet, chiliads from the ages of belief in gods and ghosts; of graves as centres of worship of deified man, over whose relics temples were to be raised; and of creation myths and legends; in brief, of any speculations about anything. We must, perforce, while keeping in mind the barriers which absence of conceptional power, articulate speech, power to record the spoken, and other faculties lacking in him, have set up, come back to the animal. And our conclusions as to what goes on in its mind, like the conclusions which we draw as to what goes on in the mind of our fellows, are based solely on its actions. Whether we watch the behaviour of the wild or of the tame animal, we shall interpret this aright only in recognizing that there are no differences in kind between it and ourselves. "The more," says Darwin, "one lives with an animal, the more he is inclined to attribute to thought and reason, and the less to thoughtless instinct."

It may be taken for granted that between man in the making—shall we say *Homo alalus*, as the intermediate between *Pithecanthropus erectus* and *Homo sapiens*?—and the higher mammals of the upper Pliocene period, there was, in common, similarity of impressions of the outer world made upon them through their sensory apparatus. That outer world, full of movements, sights, and sounds, whose nature and significance neither man nor brute could know, was the sole exciting cause of emotions among which affright had largest play. The animal, the child, and the ignorant, and therefore superstitious, adult, alike tremble before the unknown

and the unusual ; they fear, but know not why, or what, they fear. For ignorance is the mother of mystery, and the mysterious is ever dreaded. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*; said Statius,¹ following Lucretius, who, in the First Book of his immortal *De Rerum Natura*, anticipates later theories. "Fear, in sooth, takes such a hold of all mortals, because they see so many operations go on in Earth and heavens, the courses of which they can in no way understand, believing them, therefore, to be done by Divine power."² Seventeen centuries later Hobbes wrote in his *Leviathan*³: "This feare of things invisible is the naturall Seed of that which every one in himself calleth Religion; and in them that worship, or feare that Power otherwise than they do, Superstition."

The mental state of the savage, and of races far above him, is one of nervous instability. And the cause of this lies in "the feare of things invisible." "From all quarters of the uncivilized world we hear that terror or fear is the predominant element in the religious sentiment; that savages are more inclined to ascribe evil than good to the influence of supernatural agents; that their sacrifices and other acts of worship more frequently have in view to avert misfortunes than to procure positive benefits; or that, even though benevolent deities are believed in, much more attention is paid to malignant ones."⁴ Dr. Westermarck fortifies this statement by references too numerous to quote here. But as an example or two we have, first, that of "the Indian, to whom the turning of a leaf, the crawling of an insect, the cry of a bird, the cracking of a bough, might be," says Parkman, "the mystic signal of weal or woe."⁵ "No one," says Monier Williams, "who has ever been brought into close contact with the Hindus in their own country can doubt the fact that the worship of at least ninety per cent. of the people of India in the present day is a worship of fear."⁶ "The Lower Congo tribes are not progressive; their spirits are curbed and crushed by fear of exciting the cupidity of the charm-doctors. Their life's object is the appeasing and propitiating of the evil spirits.....Life is passed in a condition of constant dread."⁷ "The underlying principle of the religion of the Kacháris of

¹ *Thebais*, Bk. iii, 661.

² I, 151-154.

³ Pt. i, ch. xi, of *Man*. On this matter Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Pt. i, Mem. iii, sub-section 5, "Fear, a Cause," is well worth reading.

⁴ *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, vol. ii, p. 613.

⁵ *Jesuits in North America*, p. lxxxiv.

⁶ *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 230.

⁷ Herbert Ward, *A Voice from the Congo*, pp. 228, 241.

Assam is one of fear or dread.”¹ A Lushei’s whole life is spent in propitiating spirits to whom all illnesses and misfortunes are attributed.²

The savage will sometimes die of sheer fright from the pronouncement of a curse, or for having broken tabu. Some Maoris found and used a tinder-box, not knowing who was its owner. When this turned out to be their chief, they died of fright induced by the tribal belief in the sanctity of all his property.³ “It must seem incredible to people at home that a man can die because a ju-ju has been made against him; for example, two sticks crossed on the path with, say, a rotten egg and a fowl stuck on a stick, the man’s name having been ‘called.’ And yet one knows of numerous instances where men have died—and young, healthy men, too—against whom such a ju-ju has been made” (Preface to *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, p. v; by E. Dayrell; 1913). Tabu, the terror of the lower races, as Dr. Frazer has shown in his *Psyche’s Task*, plays an important part in the protection of property. It is both the tribal conscience and the tribal Inquisition.

But we need not leave home for examples. There is echo of what is quoted above from Parkman in Montaigne when he says: “A gust of contrarie winds, the croking of a flight of Ravens, the false pace of a Horse, the casual flight of an Eagle, a dreame, a sodain voice, a false sign, are enough to overthrow, sufficient to overwhelme and able to pull him to the ground.”⁴ Professor Davenport says there is “also in the average man a great slumbering mass of fear that he cannot shake off, made up of instincts and feelings inherited from a long human and animal past. This can be awakened in ways that every psychologist understands theoretically, and that the skilful revivalist employs practically.”⁵ The wrath of an offended God who can be placated only by the sacrifice of his Son, the ceaseless activity of a personal devil, and pictures of a literal hell of eternal torment still form part of the fear-inspiring methods of the Salvation Army, with its standard of “Blood and Fire,” and of many an uneducated preacher in obscure villages. How “revivals,” instead of effecting permanent change of character, too frequently stimulate the emotions to dire results is well known. During the movement in Wales in 1905 a “Native-born Cymro,” writing

¹ Endle’s *Kacháris*, p. 33.

² Shakespeare’s *Lushei Kuki Clans*, p. 61.

³ Funk’s *New Zealand*, p. 70.

⁴ *Essays*, Bk. II, ch. xii.

⁵ *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 224.

to the *Times*, said "that the evidence in a large percentage of bastardy appeals takes the Court back to some occasion of great religious excitement."¹ And an unexpected effect of that movement is shown in the statistics of the Ramyer County Lunatic Asylum—namely, that between 1904 and 1905 the proportion of patients admitted suffering from alcoholic insanity fell from 16 to 12 per cent., while the proportion suffering from religious mania rose from 1 to 6 per cent.

To return to our "primitive" type: man had not as yet conceived of phenomena as divided into the natural and supernatural, or of himself as consisting of material and spiritual. It is a stage represented by the Samoyed, of whom Castren says: "They do not know of any spirits attached to objects of nature, but worship the objects as such; they do not separate the spirit from matter, but adore the thing in its totality as a divine being." Ontology was unborn; there was only the inchoate sense of surrounding power, and of powerlessness to cope therewith; hence the feeling of inferiority and dependence; and, withal, the dominant primary instincts of sex and hunger which impelled man to be ever on the watch to outwit competitor and foe. Language is here vague, because these matters can be defined only vaguely, as with the impersonal before the personal, and as with the unnamed before the named are reached; a stage described in the Babylonian Creation-epic:—

There was a time when, above, the heaven was not named;
Below, the Earth bore no name.

Some help comes from the extant lower culture. We shall never understand the savage until we realize our common affinity. Speaking of the Pagan races of Borneo, Messrs. Hose and McDougall say: "Their primary impulses and emotions seem to be in all respects like our own.....The Kayan or the Iban often acts impulsively in ways which by no means conduce to further his best interests or deeper purposes; but so do we also. He often reaches conclusions by processes that cannot be logically justified; but so do we also. He often holds, and upon successive occasions acts upon, beliefs that are logically inconsistent with one another; but so do we also."² The psychological unity of man being proven, it is obvious that the nearer we can get to the

¹ *Times*, February 4, 1905.

² *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, vol. ii, p. 222.

mental standpoint of the savage the nearer we are to primitive identities which have become blurred or obscured by differences arising among the superior races in their course along varying lines of development; and the more easily shall we be able to trace the origin of the higher in the lower psychology and the persistent survival of embryonic ideas. We thus reach a stage of evolution anterior to what is known as *Animism*, or the belief in spirits embodied in everything; whence are gradually developed anthropomorphic conceptions of the gods. The root idea in this Naturism, or *Pre-Animism*, as it may be called,¹ is that of power everywhere—power vaguely apprehended but immanent, and as yet unclothed with supernatural or personal attributes. In his *Development of Religion*, Dr. Irving King defines it as “the whole general notion of an impersonal force which may very legitimately be regarded as the direct result of man’s first and most unreflective reactions to his world.”²

This has luminous example in the religion of people at a very low plane, of which an account was contributed by the late Sir H. Risley to the *Census of India*, 1901, which, with some valuable additional matter, was republished in his *People of India* (Calcutta, 1908). “In trying to find out what the jungle dwellers in Chutia Nagpur really believe,” Sir Henry says that he was “led to the negative conclusion that in most cases the indefinite something which they fear and attempt to propitiate is not a person at all in any sense of the word. If one must state the case in positive terms, I should say that the idea which lies at the base of their religion is that of power, or rather of many powers. What the Animist [more correctly, the pre-Animist] worships and seeks by all means to influence and conciliate is the shifting and shadowy company of unknown powers or influences making for evil rather than for good, which resides in the primeval forest, in the crumbling hills, in the rushing river, in the spreading tree; which gives its spring to the tiger, its venom to the snake; which generates jungle fever, and walks abroad in the terrible guise of cholera, small-pox, or murrain. Closer than this he does not seek to define the object to which he offers his victim.....some sort of power is there, and that is enough for him. All over Chutia Nagpur we find sacred groves, the abode of equally indeterminate things who are represented by no symbols, and of whose form and function no one can

¹ R. R. Marett, *Threshold of Religion*, Preface, x.

² P. 145.

give an intelligible account. They have not yet been clothed with individual attributes; they linger on as survivals of the impersonal stage of religion."¹

It is not clear from this account whether the tribes of Chutia Nagpur have any name for these "indeterminates"; but among the Red Indians names have been bestowed apparently without assumptions of personality, because retaining an abstract meaning.² This has example in the Algonkin *manitou*, the Iroquois *oki* or *orenda*, and the *wakonda* or *wakanda* of the Dakotas and the Omaha. According to Mr. McGee, an authority on the Dakotan language, the sun is *wakanda*—not *the wakanda*; the moon, the star, thunder, lightning, even a man, if he be a shaman, are each *wakanda*. The term may be translated into "mystery" perhaps more satisfactorily than in any other English word; yet this rendering is too limited, as *wakanda* vaguely denotes also power—sacred, animate, immortal. Another authority tells us that in the Omaha belief "animate and inanimate were permeated by a common life, *wakonda* was the power that makes or brings to pass. The question arises: Did the Omaha regard *wakonda* as a Supreme Being? There is no evidence that he did so. The word *wakonda* seems to have expressed the Indian's idea of immanent life manifest in all things." The like meaning appears to be attached to *manitou* and *orenda*, *manitou* being applied to any manifestation of extraordinary power, or to any person or thing supposed to possess such power. In an exhaustive article on that word Mr. W. Jones shows the correspondence of idea with *wakonda*. *Manitou*, he says, "is an impersonal substantive." In the Algonkin dialect of the Sac, Fox and Kickapoo, a rigid distinction of gender is made between things with life and things without life; when they refer to *manitou* in the sense of a virtue, a property, an abstraction, they employ the form expressive of inanimate gender. They feel that the property is everywhere, is omnipresent.³ Among the Iroquois *orenda* is this impersonal, inhering, investing power. When a storm is brewing, it—the storm-maker—is said to be preparing its *orenda*; when it is ready to burst, it has finished its *orenda*.

¹ *People of India* (Calcutta, 1908), p. 215.

² For the examples which follow I am chiefly indebted to a brochure on *The Fundamental Concept of the Primitive Philosophy*, reprinted from the *Monist*, vol. xvi, No. 1, kindly sent me by the author, Arthur O. Lovejoy. And see Mr. Sidney Hartland's *Ritual and Belief*, pp. 27, 34, 48, 124.

³ *The Algonkin Manitou*.

A prophet or soothsayer is one who habitually puts forth his *orenda*, and has thereby learned the secrets of the future. The *orenda* of shy birds and other animals which it is difficult to ensnare or kill is said to be acute or sensitive—that is, in detecting the presence of the hunter, whether man or beast. Anything reputed or believed to have been instrumental in obtaining some good or accomplishing some end is said to possess *orenda*. Of one who, it is believed, has died from witchcraft, it is said: “An evil *orenda* has struck him.”¹ More familiar, from the detailed account given by Dr. Codrington in his classical work, is the *mana* of the Melanesians, the supernatural power or influence which operates to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature; present in the atmosphere of life, attaching itself to persons and to things, and manifested by results which can be ascribed only to its operation. It is not fixed in anything, and can be conveyed in almost anything. “All Melanesian religion consists in obtaining *mana* or deriving benefit from it.”² In ancient Maori belief the *mana* of the war-god was manifest in the thunder; certain weapons possessing it had power to foretell the result of battles; and through the *mana* of the tree the woman who embraced it would conceive.³ Corresponding to this is the *agud* of the islanders of the Torres Straits, and also the *Kutchi* of the Australian Dieri, who apply the term to everything exceptional or mysterious, and, as with the shaman of North America, to their medicine men. The Yao *mulungu* has an analogous meaning; so has the Kaffir *unkulunkulu*, rendered as “the old, old one,” but in its native form not implying personality. The late Joseph Thomson, in his *Through Masai Land*, says that whatever struck the Masai as strange and incomprehensible was *en-gai*; and, while addressed as a distinct personality who is prayed-to and hears, Mr. Hollis is of the opinion that in *en-gai* “we have primitive and undeveloped religious sentiment where the personality of the deity is hardly separated from striking natural phenomena.”⁴ This has support in Sir Henry Risley’s comment on the impersonal elemental forces which are the raw material of the lower religions. “The hypothesis that the earliest beginnings of savage religions are to be sought in the recognition of forces to

¹ *Amer. Journal of Folk Lore*, 1905, p. 183.

³ Anderson, *Maori Life in Aotea*, p. 440.

² *The Melanesians*, p. 118.

⁴ *The Masai*, p. xix.

which, in the first instance, no personal quantities are ascribed, may perhaps afford an explanation of a problem which has exercised several inquirers of late—the origin of the *faineant* unworshipped Supreme Beings who figure in savage mythology almost all over the world.” The hypothesis also endeavours to account, by the operation of known processes of thought, not merely for what Mr. Andrew Lang calls “the high gods of low races,” but also for the entire congeries of notions from which the beginnings of religions have gradually emerged. It supposes that early man’s first contact with his surroundings gave him the idea of a number of influences, powers, tendencies, forces, outside and other than himself which affected him in various ways. Speaking of the early Japanese religion, Mr. Astor says: “Primitive man did not think of the world as pervaded by spiritual forces. His attitude was a piecemeal conception of the universe as alive, just as his fellow man was regarded as alive without being analysed into soul and body.”¹ Two valuable examples from the higher culture may be added. In early Greek religion Zeus is the thunder before he becomes the Thunderer; “the characteristic appellation of a divine spirit in the oldest stratum of the Roman religion is not *deus*, a god, but rather *numen*, a power; he becomes *deus* when he obtains a name, and so is on the way to acquiring a definite personality.”² As their religious calendar proves, few, if any, of the gods of the early Romans, who were an agricultural people, were personal; and, as Mr. Carter says in his *Religion of Numa*, “it required centuries to educate the Roman into the conception of personal, individual gods.”³ In some of the festivals “which may have possibly come down from the oldest period the deity is almost entirely lost. Here is good evidence of the indistinctness of the Roman conception of the divine; the cult appealed to the people as the practical method of obtaining their desires, but the unseen powers with whom they dealt in this cult were beyond their ken, often unnamed, and only visible in the sense of being sealed in, or in some sort symbolized by, tree or stone or animal..... Only the great deity of the stock stands out at all clearly—Father Mars of the Romans, Father Diovis of the whole Latin race: to these we may perhaps add the Hercules or Genius, and Juno, representing respectively the male and

¹ *Shinto*, p. 26.

² Bailey’s *Religion of Ancient Rome*, p. 12.

³ P. 70.

female principles of human life.”¹ Commenting on this, Mr. Haigh remarks that “there is no trace whatever of the worship of gods in temples, or of any attempt to portray them in human form prior to the introduction of Greek influences.”² This stage of the god-idea has illustration in Herodotus (ii, 52) when, speaking of the Pelasgians, he says: “They gave no title or name to any of their gods, for they had not yet heard any, but they called them gods (θεοὺς) from some such notion as this, that they had set (θέντες) in order all things, and so had the distribution of everything.” Like conceptions governed the attitude of our German forefathers worshipping in groves—temples not made by hands—the secret presence, seen only by the eye of faith (*quod sola reverentia videt*).

Warped by theories of a primitive monotheism, missionaries, and even philologists, have mistranslated words of vague significance, like *manitou* and the rest, as “god” and cognate terms, thus extending currency to the notion that to the Red Indian, Australian, and other aborigines, there had been given quasi-revelation concerning an All-Father or Great Spirit. On the contrary, so far as we can “think black,” and so get at the back of the barbaric mind, we find that, in the evolution of the god-idea, the passage is made from a vague, inchoate Naturism to a definite, concrete Animism which draws its support from divers sources; among these, to once more quote Hobbes, “four things—opinions of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion towards what men fear, and taking of things casual for prognostiques. In these consisteth the naturall seed of religion.”³

Nothing came suddenly into being; there are no leaps either in the psychical or the physical; and these tentative conceptions may be compared with the rude eoliths found on the Kent plateaus, or with the beak-shaped flints discovered in the Red Crag of Suffolk, in which, possibly, are to be detected the prototypes of the somewhat more symmetrical palæoliths of river-drift and cavern. Even if the monotheistic idea could be proved to precede the polytheistic, its value as a permanent factor in spiritual evolution is impaired in the universal supersession of the great deities by the crowd of godlings whom man has envisaged as controlling, for good or

¹ Warde Fowler's *Roman Festivals*, p. 337.

² *Contemporary Review*, January, 1908, p. 32.

³ *Leviathan*, Part I, ch. xii.

evil, his daily affairs, and who, therefore, are "squared" accordingly. Indra, the old Vedic weather-god, elbowed out of human affairs by local rain-gods, is a type of the multitude of High Nature-gods with whom man is on only a bowing acquaintance; who reign, but do not govern, a remote theocracy, subject of the scornful inscription which Renier found in Algeria; *Dis Securis*: "To the gods who take no heed."

There can be no convincing answer to the objection which may be raised, that the hypothesis of pre-animistic stages in the evolution of religion rests on assumption unsupported by examples. Science starts with hypotheses. The existence of an ethereal medium was assumed to account for the phenomena of radiant and other forms of energy, and its actual constitution remains an unsettled problem. The theory that life had a beginning is not weakened by the fact that no traces of the primitive organisms exist, for the assumed nature of these was such as to make preservation of their remains impossible. So the answer to any argument against a pre-animistic theory is not without force when it submits that, in the impossibility of producing examples from the incalculably remote period in which their presence may be predicated, the higher is the value of the barbaric and civilized examples cited above. For the persistence of conceptions of nameless and imageless gods which they preserve witnesses to their primitiveness. Their character betrays them as survivals; moreover, they testify to a spiritual unity and continuity which has its correspondence in the physical universe.

So much, then, may be assumed concerning the attitude of what may be called the primitive mind before phenomena whose nature it could not grasp.

Brief return may now be made to what was said at the outset about man as gregarious, because religion is primarily and fundamentally social. There is no individualism in primitive groups. "Religious beliefs are not the clever inventions of individual minds, but imposed on the individual from without. Or, to speak more strictly, we must give up thinking of the individual as having any separate existence over against society, and rather conceive him as completely immersed in one continuous social mentality."¹

Like revolutions, religion begins in the stomach. The perpetuation of the groups depended on the sex impulse. To

¹ Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 42.

allay hunger and to beget and protect offspring are dominant and permanent instincts shared by man in common with animals. And as self-preservation was possible to the individual only by union with his fellow-men, the group acted together as one man in the communal life-struggle. "The fertility of the earth and the fertility of the tribe, these two are felt in early religion."¹ Common instincts and needs secured collective action, the nature of which was determined by the group in forbidding whatever hindered, and fostering whatever helped, the common weal. Hence the origin of certain lines of conduct and customs in which were the germs of morals; hence, too, the origin of a collective behaviour before unknown powers in which was the germ of religion.²

¹ Gilbert Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 43.

² Warde Fowler says, and this applies, *à fortiori*, to earlier groups, "the ancient village community had, we may be quite sure, a common worship" (*The City State of the Greeks and Romans*, p. 33). "It was the strength of the old Roman Paganism that it brought religion into closest intimacy with daily work, that its most popular and effective gods were gods of the hearth, the market-place, and the harvest field. How alien from all that is the Christian principle of keeping one's self unspotted from the world and making religion a Sunday affair" (H. Sturt, *Idea of a Free Church*, p. 255).

THE NEOLITH

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ONLY the murmur of bees and the twinkle and throb of the
heat
On the league-long height, and the shade from a granite
stone.

Sole standing in utter loneliness—superbly alone—
A monolith ruggedly heaves, with the roseal ling at his feet.

Roll upon roll of the Moor flung out on a sky-line free ;
Clouds at the zenith blue ; in the flower-clad earth beneath
The dust of a neolith : one who has swept this heath
As the chieftain of vanished hordes and their fate and their
destiny.

When he died, that no mocking phantom, or jealous shade
Of him mighty, should darken their lodge in the distant glen,
They brought their lord hither, on shoulders of mourning
men,

And tore at their hair and howled long and fierce music made.

Then they sought for a stone of girth, that should evermore
mark his place

And be seen for remembrance, afar on the frowning hill,
Of that leader of men, whose right arm and resistless will
Had lifted his clan to power and to splendour and pride of
place.

He was cooped with his knees to his chin in a granite kist,
And a granite flake over his head that should last till doom.
So near doth he seem that one feels him not dead in his tomb,
But crouching, alive and alert, with a warrior's axe in his fist.

Does he hear the old gods of the thunder? Can summer sun
Reach down to his pit? May his ears still discern the rain
Hissing over the heather? Knows he if the purple stain
From a cloud-shadow dims his grey stone? When the ponies
run

Can he mark the dull drumming above of their unshod feet?

Does he chill when the snowdrift is clogged on the frozen
ground?
Does he thrill to the shout of the stream, or the bay of the
hound,
Or heed the sad curlew's cry and the brown snipe bleating
his bleat?

Nay, for nothing lies under the grass but the buried stones,
Or mayhap a primeval crock, or a fleck of red rust ;
For the hero is earth of the earth, and its dust is his dust,
And his flesh is the flesh of the peat, and its bones are his
very bones.

That master of men is ascended, for joy or for bane,
And life after life hath he lived and relinquished since then—
In the heather and herbage and birds, in the beetles and foxes
and men,
Each in their turn sprung of earth, each in their turn earth
again.

Yesterday clad with great thews, that builded a chieftain of
might ;
To-day where the bluebells and ferns and the starry tormentil
Spread light by the auburn beck and loveliness on the hill ;
To-morrow a moorman's fire at the fall of a winter's night.

And the aura, so azure clear, that is running above the red
Was the glow of a savage heart imprisoned within the brand ;
And the warmth on your hand was the sun on a stone-man's
hand
In the far-off, wonderful days that were lived by the ancient
dead.

So mutable myriads wake to the ring of their morning chime ;
So mutable myriads pass at the set of their final sun ;
And only Matter remains—the august, the unchanging one—
But no shape and no shadow of aught that she moulds on the
wheel of Time.

And ye who would bring man his soul from a mystical matrix
apart ;
And ye who would conjure man's life to a land beyond Matter's
ken,
Must proclaim how her rape overtook her, and wherefore, and
when,
Ere we bend to your idols, or take these your fairyland stories
to heart.

THE PAPACY DURING THE RENAISSANCE

BY JOSEPH McCABE

MACAULAY'S famous prediction of the future of the Papacy does not to-day impress the observer of the decay of the Church of Rome, but it was grounded on very respectable historical evidence. The way in which that institution has survived the shocks and changes of European life during fifteen turbulent centuries will ever attract the attention, and will often command the admiration, of the historian. When, moreover, we reflect that, contrary to a popular impression, the Church of Rome has not in its crises been ruled with astuteness or statesmanship, we understand that this remarkable power of resistance easily confirms the faith of the imperfectly educated Catholic that his Church was founded, guarded, and sustained by a divine spirit.

It is, however, precisely from the strength of one of these blows at Papal prestige that one derives the most deadly refutation of the Catholic claim. To have survived the onslaught of Roman and Goth, of Hun and Turk, of German and French, may well seem a creditable performance; but to have *merited* the fiery invectives of the Reformers and the colder and more piercing strictures of historians is utterly inconsistent with the claim of a divine foundation and guidance. No candid historian can look back over certain long stretches of Papal history and not exclaim that, if Christ ever did live, he certainly died. The Catholic, steeped in sophistry from his infancy, parries the thrust by protesting that what he calls the Holy Spirit guards the Popes only against errors in their official teaching, not against personal vice. But such a claim is a mockery of human intelligence. To say that a God may be content to watch a Pope's very rare declarations on doctrine—a privilege, moreover, which was not known to the Popes themselves until the year 1870—and remain indifferent to his moral influence is a piece of that boldness which is born of despair.

Yet there is to-day no doubt that during prolonged periods the Papal throne was deeply degraded. The tenth century was such a period. During more than a hundred years we see, amidst the appalling gloom, men of base character struggle for and win the Papal dignity, until a youth of monstrous vices (as his successor assures us), Benedict IX, so fouls Rome that a lay monarch has to intervene and purify the Church. The second great period of Papal corruption extends from the middle of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century; and it is interesting to consider the situation now that the settlement of the facts has passed from the dusty arena of controversy to the grave tribunal of history.

The degradation of the Papacy during the Renaissance was preceded and prepared by some of those chances of history which so cynically refute the providential legend. France obtained power over the Papacy, and the Papal Court was transferred to Avignon. This dislocation led at once to the development of a repulsive system of obtaining money and to a great corruption of the cardinals, who elect the Pope. Petrarch, who lived in Avignon at the time, describes the licentious life which seethed at the foot of the superb palace on the banks of the Rhone. He says repeatedly that nothing in the most candid literature of ancient Rome equals the life of those princes and prelates of the Church, and nothing in the legend of ancient Babylon surpasses it. No one who has read the little book of his "secret letters" will ever forget his picture of a white-haired, and almost toothless, cardinal, in his eighth decade of life, shocking even courtesans by his lasciviousness (Letter xviii).

The Papacy recovered on its return to Rome in 1376, but the taint of the Sacred College was too deep to be removed, and corruption haunted the Papal elections. One Pope, John XXIII, was deposed by the assembled prelates of Christendom for his numerous crimes and vices. Again the Papacy recovered, and a series of estimable men wore the tiara. But so far was Rome from enjoying a divine protection, so peculiarly human was its priesthood, that when the voluptuous spring of the Renaissance spread over Italy the Papacy suffered what we must call—after the comprehensive corruption of the monasteries and nunneries of Christendom—the most extraordinary degradation known in the history of religious institutions.

The beginning of the debasement is a piquant comment

on the claim of divine interest. At the Papal election of the year 1455 the haughty Roman families who contended for the prize reached a sullen deadlock, and a pious old Spanish cardinal, who would not live long, it was thought, was permitted to grasp the tiara. This was Alfonso Borja, the founder of the Borgia dynasty in Italy. Alfonso, or Calixtus III, was devout and virtuous, but he was a doddering old man of seventy-seven, and a swarm of ambitious relatives and needy compatriots crossed the Mediterranean and sunned itself in the shower of Papal gold. Calixtus mumbled his prayers in the Vatican, surrounded by a group of monks, while his lusty and handsome young Spanish nephews donned the highest dignities of the Church and enlivened Italy with their gallantries. Among them was Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, the father of Lucrezia and Cæsar, who at once set about the corrupt accumulation of wealth with which he would one day buy the Papacy and the creation of his numerous and notorious family.

At the election of 1471 another deadlock of the fierce rivals put upon the throne a very industrious friar-cardinal, Francesco della Rovere. There is some serious doubt whether the friar had been quite as virtuous as is commonly represented; but, however that may be, he shared the criminal folly of Calixtus III. He drew his nephews from their obscure villages and squalid monasteries, and made them princes of the Sacred College. Among them was a young Franciscan monk, Pietro Riario, whose banquets, amours, and other vices emulated those of the worst of the old Roman nobles. In two years—for the young man destroyed himself by vice within that brief period—Cardinal Pietro spent nearly a quarter of a million; and the memory lingered long at Rome of his household of five hundred servants in scarlet silk, his pretty mistress Tiresia who wore five hundred pounds worth of pearls on her slippers, his gold robes and jewels, his superb banquets and tournaments. His cousin Cardinal Guiliano della Rovere, another friar, was more sober in his immorality, for he had ambition and would one day be Pope—one of the greatest of the medieval Popes. The new Rome became so wealthy and free that the Papacy drew £10,000 a year by a tax on its 7,000 courtesans, and the succeeding Pope had to control the zeal with which the clergy augmented their incomes by the ownership of taverns and brothels.

But the corruption increased under Innocent VIII, in spite of this show of reform. Again the deadlock of the furious Roman rivals for the Papacy let in an obscure provincial cardinal; and this cardinal had children as well as nephews. Cardinal Cibò had, it is true, outlived the irregularities of his youth when he became Pope; in which we shall hardly be tempted to see the hand of Providence when we reflect that he was now in a state of senile decay. But his tardy piety did not exclude his children from his affection. His daughter Teodorina shone in Roman society. His grand-daughter Peretta was married in the Vatican. His son Franceschetto, on whom he doted, enlivened the streets at nights with rape and murder, as the youthful Nero had done fourteen centuries earlier, and shared with Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia the heavy bribes with which criminals bought immunity. The illegitimate son of the Pope's brother was made a cardinal. The fourteen-year-old son of the ruler of Florence, another future Pope of unsavoury life, was also made a cardinal. The majority of the cardinals were now loose and luxurious men. Sometimes a hundred thousand pounds would change hands when a small group of them spent a night over the gaming-table, and their hundreds of armed guards reddened Rome with murder.

Thus was the way prepared for the pontificate of Rodrigo Borgia, or Alexander VI. A shower of gold (he distributed, I calculate, nearly a million sterling among the cardinal-electors) and a shower of blood (there were in Rome two hundred murders in fourteen days) overcame the last opposition, and Rodrigo Borgia stepped into the throne of Peter. The debasement of a religious institution could hardly sink deeper.

I have still a memory of the zeal with which the Catholic writers of my youth defended Alexander VI against "Protestant calumnies." The Vatican must have smiled, as it does smile, at the naive fervour of these English Catholics. There were at that time in the secret archives of the Vatican the proofs of Rodrigo Borgia's life-long immorality, and they are now accessible to the scholars of the world and have been reproduced by more than one Catholic writer. These official documents—one may read a candid account of them in the Catholic Dr. Pastor's *History of the Popes* (ii, 453)—put it beyond question that, as was never doubted in Rome, Borgia had, while he was Cardinal and Vice-Chancellor of the Papal Court, three sons and two daughters. Vannozza dei Catanei

was, in effect, his wife for thirty years; and his corruption in the exercise of his office and the bribery practised at his election are not less admitted.

But it is his conduct as Pope that matters, and, although Catholic historians here shrink from a full acknowledgment and writhe under the plain evidence, they have to admit that he maintained his looseness in his seventh decade of life, and ended his appalling career in murder. In reality, the pontificate of Alexander VI presents, in view of his sacred character, the most repulsive page in the history of religion.

It is notorious, and admitted, that two or three years before his election he adopted as his mistress Giulia Farnese, a blue-eyed, golden-haired girl of fifteen summers, and almost to the end of his life we find her associated with him. It is notorious, and admitted, that a son was born to him in his sixty-seventh year; though such an event seems to have stirred some shame in him, and the legal document, which is preserved, is an extraordinary piece of duplicity. It is admitted, and notorious, that he gave the cardinal's hat to his son Cæsar (and just as easily unfrocked that intensely unscrupulous youth when he desired it), and to the brother of his mistress (another future Pope). It is admitted, and notorious, that he exterminated his enemies, nobles and cardinals, by sword and poison, and appropriated their fortunes. But a hundred other facts are known on evidence which only sectarian zeal can impugn, and they make up a picture which, when we consider the Christian profession, far surpasses in its license anything that the records of ancient Rome or Corinth or Babylon suggest.

At that time a German cleric, Johann Burchard, was Master of Ceremonies at the Vatican, and Burchard kept a diary, which has in modern times been published. Burchard knew the life of the Vatican, minutely and intimately, day by day; and the only argument with which the Catholic seeks to assail his truthfulness is that he, the highest official at the Vatican for thirty years, was himself (as his stories show) not free from lasciviousness! Burchard is transparently honest. His most deadly passages occur, coldly and indifferently, between long accounts of rites and ceremonies. For instance, on the last Sunday of October, 1501, you read that His Holiness was not well enough to attend service, but was well enough—here there is just a glint of malicious humour—to attend a banquet given by Cardinal Cæsar in the sacred palace, at which fifty courtesans were present, and after which they performed, nude, one of the salacious dances which the

young cardinal loved to invent. The Pope's daughter, Lucrezia, was present; and the dance was followed by a competition in vice for which the Pope awarded rich prizes that Burchard minutely describes. As the male servants of the Vatican assisted in the dance and orgie, Burchard was in a position to know the facts; and his narrative is fully confirmed by letters written from Rome at the time.

These letters of the foreign ambassadors and agents enforce and augment Burchard's account of life in the Vatican. The mistake has been made sometimes of relying on the Pope's Neapolitan enemies for information. I do not follow that indiscreet practice. The darker charges (incest, etc.) which these writers bring against the Pope may or may not be true—the time so reeked with license that anything was possible—and it is not easy for us to determine, save in a few cases, whether it was the Pope's poison or malaria that brought about so many profitable deaths. But the evidence of men who lived in and about the Vatican is a different matter, and it consistently, to the end of the Pope's life, presents a man entirely devoid of moral sentiment. "The pretty Giulia," as Rome calls the Pope's mistress, assists at indecent comedies in the Vatican, and even stands in the pulpit during a grand ceremony in St. Peter's; the Pope's daughter, Lucrezia, has an illegitimate son, apparently by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este; the Pope's cardinal-son introduces loose women in crowds into the Vatican at night; the Pope's chamberlain is found in the river, with his daughter roped to him, suspected of seeking too much favour; a man's head is found stuck on a pole with the inscription, "This is the head of my father-in-law, who prostituted his daughter to the Pope"; new "favourites" appear and disappear at the Vatican. And so on. They are glimpses of an exotic world. And "the Holy Spirit," the pious Catholic says, was not concerned with these things, since it was his business only to keep the Popes out of heresy!

Julius II closed with an oath the painted chambers of his unscrupulous predecessor. He had had to wait long for the tiara, and the day of his own irregularities was over. If we believe the Roman nobles, he had, in his time, done worse things than Borgia. But I do not wish to belittle Julius II. He was the greatest maker of artistic Rome. Let it not be supposed, however, that Roman art flourished in an atmosphere of virtue and piety. It was, on the contrary, an atmosphere of scepticism and extraordinary license that favoured

its splendid growth, and Julius II—whose savage temper, fiery oaths, and utterly unscrupulous cunning do not savour of piety—did nothing to alter it.

Then the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Leo X, mounted the throne, and the Vatican became again a pleasure-palace. Two of the chief historians of the time accuse him of vice, but I will not press their charges. Beyond any dispute he, at a time when Germany was seething with revolt, maintained about him a band of dissolute cardinals and based a more than princely luxury on a sordid traffic in sacred things. His chief favourite was Cardinal Bibbiena, a man of notorious vice, the author of one of the most indecent comedies of the time, the "Calandria." This comedy, and the equally loose comedies of Machiavelli ("Mandragola" and "Elizia") and Ariosto ("Cassario," "Suppositi," and "Lena"), beside which the comedies of Terence and Plautus are pale and virtuous, were played before Leo and the Papal Court, while Luther thundered in Germany. His official conduct was marked by a duplicity and mendacity to which it would be hard to find a parallel, his dinners were enlivened by the coarsest vulgarity, and his vanity was such that at his death he left more than a hundred thousand pounds' worth of jewels.

By that time the storm of the Reformation was in full blast, but the Papacy yielded very slowly and reluctantly. Clement VII and Paul III (the brother of Pope Alexander's mistress) vainly endeavoured to retain some at least of the old gaiety and luxury. The latter had been in his time one of the loose-living cardinals, and he resisted the demand of a reforming council until the Church in Europe was threatened with almost total destruction. But the Papacy was compelled to choose between its luxury and its power, the Council of Trent was set to "reform the Church in head and members," and a series of rigorous Popes were called to the throne. The reign of license in the sanctuary was closed.

So the story runs, even when we have set aside all honestly disputable authorities. I recall it for two reasons. First, because in meeting, as I have frequently done, the Catholic jibes at the morality of pagans, I have briefly retorted that this reign of license at Papal Rome was not less prolonged, and is, in view of the religious character of the persons, far more repulsive. Here I sketch, a little more fully, the chief period to which I refer for comparison, and

much regret that the narrow limits of space prevent me from giving more than a few meagre outlines of this extraordinary time. The Catholic reader, if I have one, will find the facts almost as candidly stated in Dr. Pastor's *History*, the most scholarly work that any Catholic has produced in our generation. My statements are, however, based, not on Pastor, but on the original authorities. My second purpose has been stated. To claim a divine guidance, or divine foundation, for—or any divine interest whatever in—such an institution is a grave reflection on the Christian God. The arrogance of the Catholic Church and its defenders is, to one who knows the history of the Papacy, not the least entertaining part of the comedy of life.

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT ?

BY CHARLES T. GORHAM,

Author of "Christianity and Civilization," etc.

NEVER have the souls of men been more sorely tried than at present. Across Europe rolls the roar of guns, peaceful villages burst into flame, ships of death sail the midnight sky and rain murder on the innocent, at every moment brave men are slain. Under the weight of overwhelming calamity the world staggers and groans. Was this all designed before the foundations of the earth were fixed? How, then, can any one worship the designer? Is it a by-product, an undesigned and unexpected result of creative power? How, then, can Omnipotence exist? Does not the state of Europe make the belief in God a superstition?

Possibly it does; but it is a superstition to which many millions will still cling. The war imports no new features into the problem of evil. It brings into more lurid colours perplexities which have faced men since the days when they dwelt in caves and lifted their wondering eyes to the rising sun. But in the shadow of the immense disaster the figure of the Loving Father recedes into dim and formless outlines. Trust in his care grows faint and feeble. Human tears blur the vision of eternal bliss, as human love has quenched the fires of hell. It is true that many, in despair of human effort, will fix their hopes the more intently on objects that seem to bring balm to their wounded souls. But where thought stings into activity, where obstinate questionings are not crushed or evaded, the claims of reality cannot be ignored. To mental sloth facts are inconvenient, if occasional, visitors. By the active mind they demand full acceptance. Theories that will not bear the daylight must go. Sooner or later, that which actually is must be perceived, and its meaning sought till comprehension comes.

The comfort derived from religious faith is largely made up of illusion. Behind the faith lies a view of the universe which is eternally unverifiable. Love of illusion is common, but it is not universal. Nor is it likely to be permanent.

The conception of the Fatherhood of God is beautiful and beneficent, but essentially a reflection of the idea of human fatherhood. It satisfies us only so long as we believe it to correspond faithfully to the facts—the total facts—of life. When it appears to be irreconcilable with facts which are beyond dispute we must, unless we are content to hold our judgment in suspense, abandon either the facts or the doctrine. Man's highest duty is to be true to the knowledge he possesses.

The religious mind is slow to appreciate the majesty of fact. It prefers the paths of pleasantness to the rugged way of truth. It hugs its ill-digested creeds and pitiful notions of a supreme being because it is comforting to dream of a mighty one taking concern for our welfare and preparing for us a home of abiding joy. If these things are not true, they must be given up. The war has so helped to shatter the conception of a benevolent Father that some pious persons are now proclaiming that man must hope for no interference whatever by almighty power with the iron laws which it has established. Will not this drive men to seek consolation in the duties and the progress of the race in this life?

Will our general outlook on life be altered after the war? If its bearing on religious faith is unperceived, religious faith will remain as it is. Thoughtful persons will feel constrained to reconsider the foundations of their belief and their theories of the universe. An increasing number will centre their hopes and ideas on the known life of man, and will discover in this life sources of comfort hitherto unsuspected. The diffusion of the material means to a healthy and happy existence, the pursuit of knowledge, the pleasures of literature, art, and music, the love of and devotion to righteousness, the joys of social converse, will afford a wide scope for all human activities and aspirations.

It is precisely in these humanistic developments that the hope of the race lies. Too long has the world revered the vain dreams and the arrogant pretensions of priest and theologian. They have no substance in them; they do not correspond with the things we know. In spite of its large claims, religion has in the past been mainly a dividing force. The spirit of the bitter sectary, burning to convert the world to his own partial views, has crushed the humble, misled the wise, and almost killed the vitality of the enlarging soul. One reason why religion retains and cherishes this sectarian tendency is that its title-deeds can be so variously

interpreted. Rationalism, on the other hand, unites men in an earnest search for and allegiance to truth; and, though their notions of truth differ widely, it strongly discounts the spirit of exclusiveness which treats partial conceptions as universal conceptions. To the Rationalist, the brotherhood of man is a greater reality than the fatherhood of God, for man exists as a certain fact—God as an imaginative hypothesis. Organized religion has proved a failure; never has it elevated the life of nations. It is time we let loose the free spirit of humanity and tested with confidence its resources.

The human struggle has had to be carried on amid the clash of giant forces, some friendly, some hostile. Goodwill alone will not achieve the ultimate victory. The spirit of love, beautiful though it be, is too feeble for the task. Intelligence, keen and resolute, wresting from the elements their eternal secrets, unfolding the hidden powers of humanity, scaling the battlements of heaven, must be the guide in whom we trust. On this human wisdom we must rely, unaided by the will-o'-the-wisps that have for so long tempted us to thrust it aside. Maeterlinck tells of the "will of earth" which has been employed with so much skill and malice to defeat the growth of finer impulses, of the tenderer sentiments of compassion and honour and justice which have been evolved in the struggle with man's native barbarism. These sentiments are the achievement of humanity alone; it is a treachery to our nature to assert that it is incapable of producing them without heavenly aid. Man is conquering for himself a grander destiny. His powers are equal to the task of organizing victory. Through the very horrors of the Great War shines a marvellous revelation of human courage and undismayed will.

And what of that sane outlook in religion which is now, after centuries of struggle, the possession of so many thoughtful minds? Will the war re-awaken a mean medieval faith, and confirm a mental subservience and dullness in which superstition cannot be distinguished from truth? Will it give the death-blow to theologies that fathered strife, and made man a puppet of the gods, dancing perforce on a blood-stained stage? The Rationalist may cherish a lively hope. Loving justice, peace, and sanity, he trusts that, when the tempest of war has spent its rage, men will see more clearly than ever its unprofitableness. There will be a revulsion of feeling against its absurdity, its injustice, its wanton waste of resources which men have been storing for generations, its huge and

needless cruelty. Surely we have common sense enough to give to the peaceful intercourse of nations an impetus born of the greater need.

The Rationalist needs faith as much as the Christian—a broader and more unselfish faith. He must reverence the moral law for which he has laboured. He must have faith in the natural order from which he cannot escape; in the power and rightness of the human soul. Looking back on his chequered past, he sees that all improvements in man's lot have been the fruit of man's wit and toil, that God has never done anything to help him, that he must be his own saviour. That a higher will exists man is prone to believe; but, finding it interpreted in a thousand fantastic ways, he is compelled to doubt that he is influenced by it, or is in contact with it, in any sense but one of imagination. If reason assures him that the existence of this will is only a "great Perhaps," he will derive but cold comfort from the uncertainty.

The Rationalist cares naught for the salvation of his soul from an impossible hell. His ideal is the redemption of humanity through knowledge. Man's mightiest powers are used for war. Why should they not be employed with equal energy and skill for peace? We make greater efforts to ward off danger than to establish a sane ethic among nations. If we can compel flame and thunderbolt to our will, and nature's secrets to leap to light at our bidding, can we not control our own passions and purposes?

Yet the impulses of the moral reason remain natural and valid. They will renew their strength, and the world will see their triumph and rejoice. Not without effort will redemption be won. The forces of progress must be strong and adventurous; man must be bold, thoughtful, self-reliant. The national nerve must be strung to high endeavour in peace, as it now is in war. As a nation, we must have hard work, plain living, and high thinking. This war has revealed our shortcomings; it has also shown that a great natural reserve of goodness exists independently of church and creed, and needs only the guidance of the wise and the free.

The reign of justice and reason is approaching. Now the mists are thick about us, but gleams of light shine through. Slowly men are beginning to see that human well-being depends on human effort; that the prayers which for long ages have gone up to indifferent heaven have died away unheard; that there is none other that fighteth for us but only thou, O Man.

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